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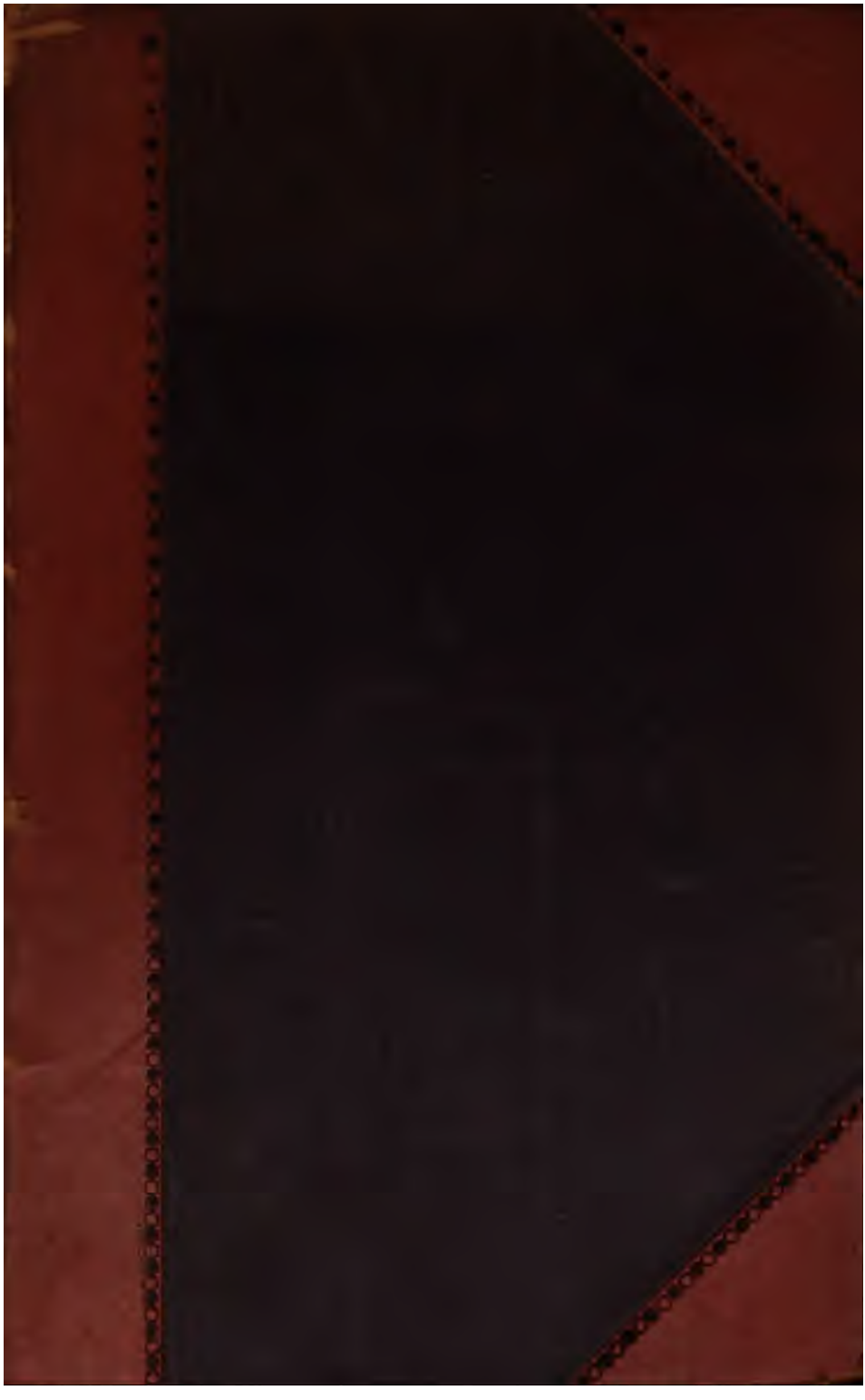

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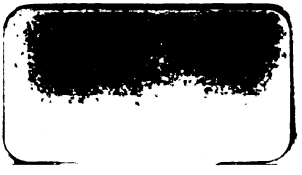


MOUNT SOREL;

OR,

THE HEIRESS OF THE DE VERES.

MOUNT SOREL;

OR,

THE HEIRESS OF THE DE VERES.

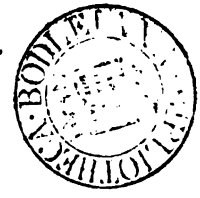
BY

THE AUTHOR OF THE

"TWO OLD MEN'S TALES."

Mrs Marsh

"She lived within her father's halls,
Beside the streams of Dove;
A maid, whom there were none to praise,
And very few to love."



IN TWO VOLUMES.

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MOUNT SOREL.

CHAPTER I.

'Twas but a bud, yet did contain,
More sweetness than shall spring again.

BEN JONSON.

OF this story I think with a sentiment of mingled regret and surprise.

To me, the past appears, in the far distance from which I view it, as indeed a dream; so changed is every thing, even during the short period to which my personal experience reaches—two-thirds of a century.

But of what a century!

We often, in reading history, start and shudder, and wonder what *we* should have felt, had we lived in such stirring times. Much, I believe, as we actually did feel, in times the most stirring, and under changes the most astounding, that have ever, perhaps, agitated society.

The close relation in which we stand to the events of our own times, is frequently the very circumstance which

prevents a due appreciation of their magnitude; we see them but as the flitting shadows of the day; mingled with, and often obscured by, the more pressing interests of our own private story. We know little of their causes —far less of their effects. It is not until they belong to the past—until gathered by that mighty artist into one vast picture—until characters have assumed their due dimensions, and scenes their relative importance—that we perceive where we have been, and what we have passed through. Myself, too!—how am I changed! Am I the same mysterious identity?—Can I—calmed, disabused; every expectation in which I indulged, defeated; every hope which I cherished, disappointed; every principle to which I clung, modified; can I be the same?

Can I; the old, cautious, hesitating man; clinging to the hierarchal constitutions of his country, as to the very foundations on which society rests; be the same as that enthusiastic youth, who yearned to sweep all these things away from the face of the earth, as with a flood—and to substitute a reign of universal equality?

Can I, whose bosom beat high with passion; to whom love was as the day spring of existence—the sole reality of life—can I be the same who smiles and sighs over the fond delusion; and whose pen falters, as it attempts to trace the long-forgotten dream? Mysterious identity—Divine sentiment of self! Personality—mystical gift of the Deity—His most wondrous, and his best! Yes, in spite of it all, I am still the same.

Changed as I am—as I feebly retrace these passages of my history, this faltering heart assures me that I am one.

First, I must make you acquainted with Holnicote; you shall hear of Mount Sorel by and by.

There was, then, in one of the remote counties of England, bordering upon the principality of Wales, a certain mansion named Holnicote, which had stood, much in the state in which I was acquainted with it, for centuries.

It was not a castle, nor even a castellated mansion; it was an old manor-house. A beautiful relic of the domestic architecture of the middle ages; of that era, of that taste, and of those manners, which I have lived to see contemned, by the philosophy of my younger days, as barbarous and childish to the highest degree; and a taste for which, I now live to see revived, amid the ardent, sensitive, imaginative race now springing up around me.

This house was a thing of innumerable gables, peaked roofs, and clustered chimneys: of high narrow casement windows, with small diamond panes; of projecting oriels with octagonal ones; many filled with coloured glass, which shed its harmonising light upon the long twilight passages, and oak panellings within. A porch, ornamented with a profusion of carved stone-work, distinguished the garden front; and opened upon a walled and terraced garden—terrace below terrace, united by flights of steps, and supported by low walls covered with fruit trees and flowering shrubs, and ornamented by large stone urns placed at regular intervals.

Very few specimens of this style of gardening continue to exist in this country; the last I saw, was, many

years ago, at Gloddarth, near Conway—whether still preserved or not, I am ignorant.

You must have patience with a somewhat tedious description; because I wish you to be well acquainted with the place, where so many of those whom I am about to introduce to you, dwelt.

The upper terrace, that in front of the house, was very wide; and it was nearly occupied by a broad gravel walk, edged on each side by narrow flower borders, quaintly trimmed with box; and, in summer, filled with a thousand gay, but now discarded flowers. In that border, which ran close under the windows, were numerous flowering shrubs—or rather very old trees, which, trained to a great heighth against the walls, mingled their fantastic branches with the variety of casements, peaks, cornices, carved water-spouts, and all the grotesque stone-work of the front, in a most picturesque and beautiful manner. How rich was the effect of the clusters of red and white roses, the dark myrtles, the clematis, jessamine, magnolias, apricot and pear trees—twisting their hoar and ragged arms, and wreathing with their leaves and flowers, all the intricacies of this antique architecture!

From the centre of the terrace, a broad flight of stone steps descended to the one below—arranged and laid out much in the same manner. And so, terrace below terrace, and flight of steps succeeding to flight of steps—they fell in regular formal order, till they terminated in the valley beneath.

Each flight of steps was surmounted, on either side, by its rampant griffons supporting the shield of the

ancient family: so that, standing at the summit of the highest flight, the eye fell between an avenue of these monsters, which, to compare small things with great, might have reminded you of an avenue of sphinxes at Thebes or Persepolis. The effect was not bad; neither was that of the many stone statues, intermingled, here and there, with the shrubs of the garden.

This succession of terraces terminated in the green plateau of a narrow valley; traversed by a wide, shallow, pebbly stream, clear as crystal—too wide to be called a brook, and too shallow to be called a river—which separated the garden of Holnicote from a precipitous, almost mountainous hill, rising opposite, covered by broken copses, and heathy knolls, with faces of red rock intervening.

The gardens on each side were shrouded and altogether enclosed, by dark, deep woods; separated from the terraces by fences, over which the heavy boughs threw their black cavernous shade. On the upper terrace two low iron gates gave admittance to these mysterious, and almost impervious labyrinths; whose funereal aspect offered little temptation to the eye.

Altogether, Holnicote was a gloomy place—the woods and opposite hills so completely enclosing it, as to shut out every vestige of that blue distance which gives cheerfulness to every landscape.

The other front of the house bore a still more decided character of dulness. There was a broad gravel sweep before the door; and beyond this, the grounds stretched green and wide; surrounded by black, heavy

clumps and clusters of trees, which effectually excluded, on this side also, the cheerful effect of distance.

The habitation stood in an extensive deer park.

Such was the dwelling-place of Ralph de Vere: such the possession—with its huge trees, ferny brakes, and an extent of, not too fertile, arable and pasture land—which had descended in a direct line, from father to son, since the days of Roger de Verus, Knight-bannerct; who had crossed the channel with the great Conqueror, and had obtained it by marriage with the beautiful Editha, heiress of that stalwart Saxon Erle, Morcar of the Danna Frith, or holy wood of Danna.

Mr. de Vere was a very proud, and, at the same time, a very shy man: these qualities were, at his time of day, more frequently united than they are now. Men lived more entirely upon their own estates, than they do at present; and did not habitually visit the capital, unless summoned by private or parliamentary business. That universal fusion of society which now takes place, and which has gone further to level distinctions, and to diminish unsocial pride, than all the legal institutions in the universe could have done—had not then generally obtained. Many country gentlemen resided, almost without interruption, at their remote country seats: tyrants, or benefactors, to the dependants around them—as the case might chance to be.

Of these was Mr. de Vere. He disliked general society—because his pride of birth was continually *froissé*, by the pretensions of those whose pretensions he never would admit; and because his constitutional shy-

ness prevented him from finding compensation for that which he thought so disagreeable, in the pleasures of conversation and cheerful intercourse. Cheerfulness, indeed, was a word the meaning of which he did not seem to understand; he hated mirth; he was disgusted with laughter; and the free, unfettered intercourse of human beings, was offensive to his taste, and sense of the propriety of things.

What a man have we here!—In what a false, unnatural, constrained position is human life thus presented!—How can any thing that is genial, affectionate, or animating, be expected to flourish in such a soil?

It did not, and it could not. Mr. de Vere, though by no means wanting, either in imagination or feeling, was the very *dryest* mán, with whom it was ever my lot to become acquainted.

This descendant of hoary Saxons and antique Normans, had married a young lady with pretensions, in that respect, far unequal to his own. His estates, like those of others who in the mighty changes of human affairs have adhered to their landed property, had, in the course of successive generations, become much embarrassed; and a marriage, somewhat derogatory to their high pretensions, as far as blood was concerned, had, more than once, served to patch up impaired fortunes.

The present Mrs. de Vere stood in this unenviable position. The family of De Vere had condescended, with her, to accept pretty largely the means of relieving their house from the most pressing embarrassments; a benefit for which gratitude was never felt nor expressed

in the slightest degree. To admit into their lofty sphere the daughter of two generations—one whose origin, beyond those two generations, was lost in that night of obscurity, which conceals what it is the interest of no one's pride to penetrate—was return enough.

Mrs. de Vere's father had been a country gentleman, who had purchased the estate on which he lived with the fruits of his own and of his father's industry in the legal profession—the lower branches of it, alas! He had been—mention it not in the halls of de Vere—in trade.

Little mattered it, that Sophia was lovely, accomplished, tender, and refined—the darling of a circle of which she was the sole representative: Mr. de Vere never considered her as his equal. She was to him but a Pariah, after all; and, with the selfish pride of many men, he loved her the less because he was obliged to her. Had she been more decidedly his inferior—the daughter of his gamekeeper, for instance, raised by his partiality to her high position—he might, perchance, have taken pride in his own creation; as it was, those innumerable petty humiliations, to which it is the pleasure of some men to subject their wives, had been her daily portion. Till that state—which Godwin (in some later essays, undeservedly neglected), so feelingly describes, and so justly regards, as perhaps the worst to which a human being can be reduced—became hers: that of a broken spirit. A state in which the energy of resistance is destroyed—be it to external circumstance, internal depression, or the tyranny and injustice of others. She was gentle, passive,

silent. She spoke little, for she could not harden herself to the contemptuous silence, or the sarcastic contradiction, with which remarks of hers were too often met: she acted little, for where was the aim of action for one who found her wishes so rarely consulted, nor could cherish the remotest hope of seeing any plan, the suggestion of her own views or ideas, carried into execution. She had too gentle a spirit to resist oppression by violence—the only arm, which, in her case, might have been effectual; and which might, through the storms of contention, in some degree have emancipated, if it had not absolutely shipwrecked her. For such, indeed, is too often the consequence of tyranny, either public or private. It destroys its victims by the slow decay, consequent upon that moral weight which it imposes upon the soul; or it forces them, by a species of convulsive resistance, into paroxysms, that shatter the whole social fabric to atoms.

That Mrs. de Vere was *very* unhappy, I do not mean to say; for that state of indolent passivity commonly blunts the sharpness of feeling; but Madame de Staël, with her usual exquisite penetration into human things, well remarks, "Il y a toujours, dans la degradation, un malheur sourd, dont l'on ne se rend pas compte." A human being, under such a yoke, is more unhappy than he is himself aware of. The sharp sting of actual misery, perhaps, he may escape; but the throb of joy—the sunshine of the mind—*never* reaches him. He lives, as under the heavy, leaden atmosphere of a still, cold, bleak November day. Oh! far more genial is the bright hurrying wind—the snowy rack sweeping

over the azure heaven—the glimpses of sunshine, between the frequent storm.

Sophia had loved—she had loved the cold, haughty Ralph de Vere—she had given to him her virgin heart.

Was she the more unhappy for this, do you think? —I say *not.*

I hold, that the divine influence—the holy spirit which wraps and unites the whole creation—*never* is quite ineffectual to soften, harmonise, and elevate the most unpropitious condition. That she loved Mr. de Vere, was the sole redeeming circumstance, after all, in her lot. It is true, it gave a poignancy to his indifference, which rendered it, at times, too bitter; but it ennobled the submission she would have been forced, under any circumstances, to yield. The implicit obedience which he expected was rendered easy, and more natural, as it were, by those feelings which make woman subject to man—subduing her heart to that fond devotion, which elevates the subservience, too often exacted, into the free offering of a generous heart. We sympathise in the feelings of the "Notte-browne Mayde:" we do not look upon them as the mean expression of a slavish temper; but as the generous liberality which flings *all* away, for the sake of the idol of its fervent affection.

This tenderness on her part, had not been entirely without its effect upon him. It is true, as I said, he treated her with a sort of habitual indifference; as a cold, and proud nature is apt, without thinking upon it, to treat one regarded in every way as its inferior; but he

rested upon her affection; and though he never condescended to express the necessity in words, seemed more easy when she was by his side, and honoured her too, by some slight portion of his confidence: for, to some one, human nature must pour out its feelings—and the haughty reserve, which separated him from the rest of mankind, would seek relief at times in the society of one patient listener, who dared not be weary, and who, sometimes, sympathised.

But Mrs. de Vere was not without her own enjoyments in this dreary lot: she had one little daughter. This daughter ought to have been a son, to be sure. Bitter had been the disappointment expressed at her birth; and the infant had long been treated by the father with almost sullen indifference: but when year followed year, and no hope of any other child appeared, he began to look at her with some little interest. As no son was to be had, to make an eldest son of his daughter—that common refuge of disappointed family pride—began to offer some slight compensation to his feelings. Had she been the eldest of a dozen sisters, to this sentiment they would all have been sacrificed without compunction. But, as it happened, no sacrifice of this sort was demanded here, and the mother's tenderness and fond idolatry were in harmony with the father's ambitious sentiments.

The result was, that between the nervous anxieties of the one, and the lofty views of the other, the little girl was brought up in the most singular and secluded manner.

The mother could hardly endure her to be one mo-

ment out of her sight; the father thought scarcely any associations that the near neighbourhood could furnish, sufficiently distinguished for her. She received, therefore, few impressions from society of any kind. Nature—the workings of that character originally stamped upon the individual soul—and her domestic affections alone, united to form Clarice.

The laws by which that original stamp is governed, escape all calculation. Hereditary temperament seems to be one of them; and yet how often does the child start forward, so blended of qualities inherited from various *souches* of the families of father, mother, grandfather, &c. &c., as to defy all attempts at tracing whence its features were derived: springing forward a new, original, delightful being—fresh, as it were, in creation, from the Great Master's hand.

Born of the silent, drooping mother—of the cold, reserved father—whence did she draw that warm, imaginative, genial being; that face instinct with spirit, life, and joy; that ardent, hopeful, active nature? Ah, Clarice! wert thou then, as poets have fabled, a bright one descended from the pure and glorious heavens; the beams still glistening in thine infant eye, and lingering round thy angel form and feature?

You can scarcely conceive a prettier sight, than when Mr. de Vere gave one of his grand, stately, formal dinner parties. Country dinners are proverbially dull things now, but they were then the most excessively stiff, stately affairs you can imagine. All the company in full dress, by the staring daylight of four o'clock at latest, crossed from their country seats—ten to twelve

miles, perhaps, distant—in their coaches and four, and ranged themselves in a formal circle round the grand, cold saloon; which, locked up on ordinary days in its papers and coverings, was opened and visited solely upon such occasions. Not a book, not even a newspaper lay upon the tables; not the slightest relief to the eye or the imagination; the company sat, held up their high heads, and talked. I was often there with my father; and I was going to say that nothing could be prettier than the apparition, upon such occasions, of the fair gentle mother and the little Clarice.

Mrs. de Vere used to be dressed in much simplicity; her dress was a type of her pure and gentle nature; soft and delicate, and tucked and done about with lace; so that the outline was undefined and hazy, as it were, like that of a misty, melting cloud: then her face was so pale, with her soft brown hair just slightly powdered —her voice so low, soft, and gentle. . . . .

The little Clarice held by her hand—she always appeared in the drawing-room with her mother. The little girl dressed in her beautiful India muslin and lace frocks, with a very broad sash of blue or clouded riband, tied behind; or at times of painted tiffany and spangles; her brown hair clustering round her cheeks, and falling in ringlets round her pretty shoulders; her complexion very fair, of that delicate porcelain transparency which is so rare and so inexpressibly lovely; her little features cut in the finest lines—beautiful now, and promising more beauty—and her blue eyes usually cast down with a pretty childish shyness; but if raised to your face, by a sudden glance of curiosity or amuse-

ment, they had a smiling brightness, that was excessively delightful. Her mouth, too, how harmonious! how sweet and peaceful, yet how feeling, and how expressive!

Quiet as the lovely little being was; you felt that she could be airy, gay, and volatile as a bird, when the restraint of "the company" was away.

Many a young lady crossed the room to kneel down by her, as she stood at her mother's knee, and engage her in childish prattle. How cheerful and ingenuous was her demeanour! How sweet and confiding her infant innocence! She seemed to know neither distrust nor fear; the charming shyness of young unspoiled nature, alone threw a pretty check over her spirits. She answered gaily, but in a little low whispering tone, as if she feared to make a noise—to disturb those grand, grown-up people—which a child ought not to do. But there was no reserve in her little heart; she always had some pretty, clever thing or other, to say.

The mother's eye spoke volumes as she stole a look down upon her, on these occasions; and even the father, as he stood with his back to the mantel-piece, discoursing upon the subjects of the day—might be caught glancing, now and then, at the little charmer; as her childish, merry, but suppressed laughter, rang softly through the apartment.

I was then a great big boy—my father was a gentleman, and I was tolerated as the son of one—but I was, in fact, a heavy, unformed, lubberly boy. I used to feel so to myself; as if I was a huge unlicked bear's

cub—a heap of chaotic matter—hardly informed or animated by a soul—still all in amaze at itself, and every thing around it. The image I presented to my own imagination, was that of a lump of heavy clay: the image that Clarice presented to me, was that of a glittering, dewsprung, flower-cradled fairy—a sparkling, tiny, transparent, precious gem; a light, flitting, azure butterfly—like the petal of a flower on the wing. The beautiful child seemed too etherial a being to be looked upon as a child. She was to me, as the essence of beauty—as a vision—an airy dream—a creature of the element—framed of the crystal light of heaven! While I was a Polepheme—a heavy gnome—a big lump of earth and formless matter.

I used, before dinner, to creep round and get as near to her as I could, and listen while she prattled to the pretty young ladies who would be kneeling before her; she, twisting her little dimpled, delicate hands in their curly hair, or among their gay ribands and glittering ornaments; lifting up those loving, questioning, pretty eyes—shrouded as they were by her beautiful long eyelashes—her infant lips prating and smiling, while sometimes in an ecstasy of delighted laughter, would those little soft fat arms be clasped round some favourite's neck; and the sweet face smother the laugh in her bosom. Every change was to me more delectable than the last; more exquisite than the most beautiful picture, or the finest work of art could have been—it was ineffable. Coloured, living, brilliant before my eyes; it was like a glory of the bright sunset clouds, or the rich variety of delicious flowers.

Five minutes or so of bliss inexpressible used to be mine. It was the custom when the company arose and retired to the dining-room—to which apartment, marshalled in solemn pomp, they slowly adjourned—that Clarice's nurse should come into the saloon, and carry the young lady off to bed.

Then my turn came—Nurse was the kindest and most indulgent of human beings; and on a fine summer's evening, the dear little rebel hated to go to bed.

As soon as the last long sweeping train disappeared behind the door; I used to creep up to her slowly—you may see me—I had nothing of the gay forwardness of a lad brought up at a public school, accustomed to fight his way, and with a happy audacity to depend upon, and yet think little of himself. My *self*—ever seemed to cumber me—my *self*-distrust made me think of my *self*—I did not know how to carry my *self* about—it loaded me, it obstructed me. You may see the great heavy boy slowly leaving his chair, creeping up to the little smiling darling, and in spirit falling almost prostrate at her feet—kissing the very ground on which her tiny sandal trod. Conceive his ecstasy at these moments—for the little thing loved the lumbering boy; he was almost her sole acquaintance in the world.

The little cherub would stand holding Nurse's hand in act to go away: lingering reluctant, and prattling, now to him, now to Nurse.... he would venture upon such gentle plays as his unformed nature could deal with. I see her now, running round Nurse, clinging to her white apron—shrieking half in real, half in feigned terror—as the great boy on hands and knees, roars, like the great

brute he thought himself, and follows. Then it is time to go, Nurse says;—but no, the laughing rebel screams that she will not; slips her dimpled hand from Nurse's fingers, and away flies the little fluttering white frock through the window, and along the terrace; and we pursue; and I, the happy victor, catch the little struggling wight; imprison her in my arms, and for my reward, Nurse gives us half a quarter of an hour; and pick-a-back, I am her horse, her dolphin, her humble slave—and carry her; my fairy queen, my little divinity, love, and joy!

Thus began my connexion with Clarice: thus took rise those bonds, those influences, which have been my *fate*. The boy is parent of the man.

The childhood of Clarice was passed in pure and beautiful imaginations, as the thoughtless gaiety of the infant disappeared before that transition state, as we may consider it, of childhood—when growth of a more strong, and, if I may say so, fibry sort, takes place of the flower-like, soft developments of infancy. The young girl of ten or twelve sought in nature that companionship, which her own wild spirits had afforded to the infant. The little girl, on public days, appeared now, demure and grave; the beautiful flowing curls cut off, the small head disclosed in all its fair proportions, by the close cut and neatly combed hair; her frock of cambric, plain and unornamented; her beautiful features and exquisitely formed limbs, in the half-developed state of that age—yet lengthy and unproportioned as they were, commanding a certain admiration by their delicacy; the long, dark eyelashes, on her colourless cheek; and the lifting up of those large,

lustrous eyes, almost the only beauty that attracted ordinary attention.

To me, she was only more than ever charming—this sweet, demure, modest, good, little, well-behaved girl, seated by her mother's side—no kneeling young ladies now playing with or amusing her—answering in civil, measured accents, the polite conversation addressed to her; colouring, and starting a little, if her father spoke to, or even was looking at her; yet composed, though quiet; a something even in this little, uncharactered, and still demeanour, that excited respect and interest—in me, it was worship.

I was now a youth myself, and I was entered at —— Academy. That horrid feeling of lubberlyness had in great degree left me; the Cyclopean mass was beginning to develope itself in well-formed lengthy limbs, to which even I could not deny a certain correctness of proportion; my features were rising and breaking through, as it were, that cloud of flesh and bone which had encumbered them—but my spirits had not acquired elasticity, nor my conversation brilliancy. I was still a serious, thoughtful, reserved youth; speaking little, and enjoying little, except the pleasure of observing: leave me in a corner unnoticed, let me but watch others, and I was content. I ceased in this new pleasure to think so much about myself:—by an unfortunate contradiction, just at the age when this self-presence, if I may so call it, this self-inspection, might have been useful, by tending to self-improvement; to the formation of my manners, and polish of my appearance; the tendency seemed to leave me. I became extremely indifferent to

the effect I produced upon others, and occupied only with that which they produced upon me; and if it had not been for my good father's animadversions—I had long, alas! been without a mother—my appearance might have been remarkable for its negligence. My desire to please him, corrected any offensive degree of this defect; but all those nicer graces, which it seems the nature of youth to covet and by coveting to acquire, were unknown to me. I was a very plain-looking, though neither an ugly, nor a vulgar youth; remarkably silent, dull, and unsocial; except with a few chosen ones, with whom my spirit sympathised.

I was, in those days, quite contented to sit where I could look at Clarice; the farther away the better pleased was I—because I the less feared to fix my eyes unceasingly upon her. I could have sat so for hours and hours. I was still too young to be considered a part of the company; I was not expected to talk; so my enjoyment was quite undisturbed. And there appeared to be little change or variety in it; for the young lady sat extremely still, and spoke very little; only answering when she was addressed, and that in the quietest, and almost in a formal way, so composed was it. But I marked the slightest variation of colour, the slightest change of feature; I hung upon the low accents which reached my ear—often only as a faint murmur, for I could rarely hear what she said; but I distinguished that murmur amid the mingled voices of the largest company;—in fact, in the largest company, I rarely saw any thing else, or heard any thing else; I was as entirely alone, as if I had been in a desert; such were

my unfortunate habits of abstraction—I was alone with Clarice.

Sometimes my father and I would dine at Mr. de Vere's when there was only a small party; and then, when the usual severe formality was in some little degree suspended; when we sat in the blue parlour, and not in the saloon; when Mr. de Vere and my father would be talking politics; when Mrs. de Vere had a little needlework in her hand, and every body did not seem so dreadfully unoccupied and observant—I would by slow advances from chair to window, and window to table, slide into the seat next to Clarice, and begin to talk with her.

Our happy little meetings when the company retired to dinner had been long over. On my return, after a considerable absence, I was summoned to take my place at the dining-table; and a very plain, grave old lady, dressed in black, with a very formal, though not in the least a forbidding manner, was substituted for dear Nurse. With her Clarice remained while we adjourned to the dining-room.

The only communication, therefore, that we had together was in our little talks upon these occasions.

She always looked pleased, when I at last accomplished that most difficult and nervous enterprise of reaching her side; and though she sat so still that her little delicate frame could not by any gesture evince joy, or alacrity; the readiness with which she turned her face towards me, and, replying to my formal little questions, soon entered into what might be called con-

versation—encouraged me to cast off my shyness, by the delightful conviction that my presence was agreeable, and my talk interesting.

Her ideas were chiefly engaged by the simple objects that surrounded, and occupied, her simple life.

Like other little girls of her age, her affections and her lively imagination, unoccupied by more important things, overflowed upon those objects, animate and inanimate, which surrounded her. Her grotto in the garden was wreathed with dandelion chains and bouquets of flowers; its tiny chambers tapestried with the rich colours of the poppy, rose, and campanula; on beds of lapis lazuli, formed of the clustering hare-bell, her little images of nymphs and fairies lay. She never had taken the least delight in the common amusement of a doll, dressed according to the mode—an image of ordinary life;—her fancies were more inventive; and found expression in the most beautiful creations of this imaginative sort.

Her darling pet was a milk-white fawn, which she had reared from infancy—a milk-white doe, indeed, but it was happily so small, that it was little larger than an ordinary fawn. This beautiful creature, its neck wreathed with a garland of flowers, was the privileged denizen of the terraces and gardens, where Clarice spent the greatest part of her time. It was her constant and cherished companion—with it she ran races, laughed, and sported; it was a young playmate of her own age to her.

Her good and gentle governess sat with her book, reading, while Clarice frolicked with her fawn. Lessons

in those days were not very long things, and governesses were not expected to be able to teach every thing; they were rather duennas than governesses—happily for good Mrs. Fermor, who had very little to impart in the way of accomplishment; but who nevertheless formed her pupil well. She imparted her piety, her gentleness, her just sense of things; and would have fain given her precision and exact order. The first qualities were imbibed as mother's milk; the little formalities laughed at, defied, and cajoled away, with winning wiles and kisses.

As we sat together, Clarice would talk of all her pets and plans to me; and blest was I, when any opportunity allowed me to second, or assist them.

In these more easy meetings, we used sometimes to walk out in the garden before dinner; when Mrs. de Vere, Clarice, and I, were sure to be found together. She would take me to her grotto, which was her bower of bliss; and, indeed, a bower of bliss it might be called. The grotto had been scooped in the hill, and in front of it was a hermitage, built of heath and the branches of oak trees mingled—with wooden seats and a table of rough oak. The grotto was in the fashion of those things, dark: scantily lighted from above, by some panes of coloured glass, concealed among the variety of shells and sparkling stones that adorned the walls and roof. Here were all those fairy constructions that I have mentioned, carried on; here this sweet Zenobia, queen and architect of the little world within, raised and adorned the beautiful and transient frostwork of her imagination.

Proud was I, when some new and beautifully

tinted shell, or rich coloured stone, could be obtained by me, to add to her collection; happy beyond measure, assisting her to choose its place, and enshrine it among the rest. Mrs. de Vere used to sit in the hermitage in front, while we were busy in the grotto within. Thus occupied, Clarice was not in the least like the little girl of the drawing-room; she was busy, energetic, animated;—but at all times, and everywhere, she was simplicity itself. Not the slightest affectation, or pretension in her manner—cheerful, sprightly, eager, busied, occupied—about all, and everything, but herself.

I don't know whether at this time I might be said to adore her—I was wrapped up in her—she was every thing. She was all the joy, pleasure, and society, of my life. I loved my father in a pious way—I loved her in no way—I was made of love to her—I have continued so. She has been my being—it has not been as if *I* loved her—it has been, and is, as if the love of her was *me*. Do I make myself comprehended?

I linger over those early days; who does not love to recall them? To whom, looking back, do they not appear coloured in all the tints of the eastern heaven—the aurora of life! As we recede, faint lies that light at a distance; we are urged forward to the burden and heat of the day—but the soft tints yet linger behind us, mellowed into harmony by distance. Ah! blest are those, who in the western sky behold the reflection of those early beams.

Angel Clarice! angel of my life!—But I will have done. . . . . What right have I to fatigue any one, with my childish recollections.

CHAPTER II.

Times go by turns, and chances change by course;
From foul to fair, from better pass to worse.
ROBERT SOUTHWELL.

MR. DE VERE could not be called a rich man; for so proud a man he might have been considered poor. Who is not poor who is insatiable? and pride is insatiable.

His ambition lay in the endeavour to recover that large extent of landed property, and consequent political interest, which had once belonged to his family; but he was not of a liberal temper; he was fond of money.

I have observed that this fondness for money justifies the notions of the phrenologists; by which I mean, that it does not seem the result of various other tendencies of the character, but often lies, as it were, accidentally jumbled among a heap of incongruous qualities; just as one should expect might be the case if their theories are true. I have observed the love of money among the noblest and the meanest; united with selfishness and with generosity; with enthusiasm, and with indifference; with pride, and with ambition—as well as constituting

the low sordidness of the grovelling miser. The contrary temper, the infatuated carelessness and waste of money which ruins the best and the wisest, seems, in the same apparently accidental manner, to be engrafted upon every variety of character.

Mr. de Vere's love of money was not merely a form of ambition. The love of money for money's *worth* is one thing, the love of money for money's *sake* quite another. You may distinguish the difference by a certain slowness, a dislike to part with *the* money, when the object is decided upon, and the sum to be sacrificed ascertained—a procrastination of all affairs where there is anything to *pay*. This disposition was manifested by Mr. de Vere upon an important occasion. How important, he, or any of us, little anticipated. Dark future!—Inscrutable labyrinth of things!—Who shall penetrate thy obscurity?—Not the wisest, the most experienced, nor the best. To-day alone is ours—let us work, while it is called to-day.

Behind the mountainous hill which I have described, as forming the boundary to Mr. de Vere's property on the garden side of the house—was a very large estate, which marched with Holnicote for a considerable distance; the boundary line traversing the top of the hill in a devious, irregular manner, sometimes descending on the De Vere side, sometimes on the one opposite. So that in some places, the De Vere estate was commanded, to use the military term, by some portions of the Mount Sorel property; while at others, the proprietor of Holnicote had a similar advantage over his neighbour. From the windows of Holnicote,

these portions of land were distinctly visible; but as the whole summit of this wild hill was nothing but a wilderness of heath and fern, the existence of this boundary line was of little consequence; it being totally obscured to the ordinary observer. Mr. de Vere, however, well knew of its existence; and he never cast his eyes upon that hill top from his terrace—where he so often walked in solitary, silent musing—without a feeling of irritation and discontent.

This estate had, indeed, once belonged to his ancestors. It had been forfeited at the great rebellion; in which contest the house of De Vere was, of course, engaged on the cavalier side—advocates of the highest Tory principles. At the restoration, a considerable part of the family property had been recovered; but this fine estate had fallen into the hands of one who well understood, in those fickle times, how to make his part good with the influential under the new order of things; and the estate had never been restored to its original owners.

The county in general had forgotten the contention for this property, which had in those distant days long agitated the courts of law; but not so the family: the sense of injustice rankled at their hearts, and they ever looked upon themselves, as in equity still proprietors of the land.

Their feelings however of indignation, with a curious inconsistency, were not so much levelled against the government which had neglected to reinstate—as against the party which had originally confiscated. The base desertion of his friends and fellow-sufferers, on the

part of the gay and reckless king, was regarded with indulgence: the legitimate severity exercised towards a party opposed to them, on the side of the republicans, resented with unmitigated bitterness; which bitterness overflowed towards the possessor of the estate, be he who he might. The lord of Mount Sorel had never been welcome in the halls of De Vere.

"Have you heard the news, Sir?" said Mr. de Vere's steward to him one morning, when they had finished the usual discussion of the affairs of the home farm, and of the estate in general. "Mr. Entwistle—returning from hunting late last night—his horse shyed, it is supposed, at the new white fingerpost put up at the corner of Parker's-lane. I suppose, Sir, he was rather *mellow*—for Mr. Entwistle was a capital horseman."

"Well," said Mr. de Vere, somewhat impatiently, "what is Mr. Entwiddle—Entwitle—Mr. What-do-you-call-his-name's, horsemanship to me?"

"Sir," said the old man—"he is dead."

"Dead!" exclaimed Mr. de Vere, somewhat shocked at the sudden announcement.

"He fell from his horse—which started off, they say, full speed, dragging his master in the stirrup. The groom was not far behind; but before he could stop the horse, it was all over . . . . he was quite dead."

"He was an inveterate drunkard," was Mr. de Vere's remark.

"Why, yes, Sir—he was *jolly*. But a prettier man

in a hunting saddle you could not easily see. . . . . However, he's gone, Sir."

"Will the hunters be sold?" asked the master.

"Law, Sir! the hunters! There are strange reports afloat as to his affairs already. They say all must be sold. Hunters, plate, furniture, timber, house, and and."

"Land!" reiterated his master.

"I don't in course," continued the old man, "know, for certain, any thing as yet—but they *do* say, Mr. Entwistle took to strange courses; and kept queer company when he was in London. One Mr. Wills . . . . Mr. Wicks, Mr. ——."

"Wilkes," said the master.

"Ay, that's the name—he be dead some time ago. Howe'er, in his day, Entwistle, they say, played strange sort of pranks—and dipped his estate pretty deeply—and sin' then, things have been little better—he has been among the prime o' that in Lonnon. Howe'er, he was, for certain, a beautiful figure on a horse."

"A low vulgar rake," said Mr. de Vere, as to himself.

"So Sir, the short and the long is, that they say—all the estates, Mount Sorel and all—must come to the hammer."

"Mount Sorel!" said Mr. de Vere. "Well, Johnson, this is enough for to-day. Purton's rent must be paid on Monday, the 31st—you understand—and make *him* understand, or an execution in the house."

"Yes Sir," said the old steward, with a sort of sigh.

"Tenants are only ruined by this pernicious system

of delay and indulgence. Purton is a poor man, and a poor farmer, I shall be better without him. As for that rascal, Gregson, let me never hear a syllable in his favour again—the scoundrel! Let him carry his vote and his conscience to a better market—I have no places for conscientious blackguards on my property—you understand—"

"Yes, Sir;" another sigh

"This is all for to-day.—You remember, the eight acres in wheat. Good morning to you, Johnson."

The old steward passed his hand downwards over his hair, made his bow, and left the room.

"Mount Sorel in the market!" repeated Mr. de Vere, seating himself before his writing-desk, as the old man left the room. "Mount Sorel"—

He sat some time musing—then he rose slowly—he opened an iron door fitted to the wall, and displayed an iron cupboard filled with deeds and papers; ranged in precise order; the gray and hoary condition of most of them, testifying to the antiquity of the transactions to which they had related—he removed several of these, and opened a drawer at the very back of the cupboard; it was also filled with papers. He lifted them out one by one; then he came to a small packet, and slowly opened it—it contained a lock of hair, and a handkerchief brown with age, but distinctly stained with blood.

"Ralph de Vere, of Mount Sorel, —— shire, murdered by the bloody rebels, Anno Domini 1647."

He examined it some time, and then carefully fold-

ing it up in the time-stained paper, replaced it with a sort of reverence in the drawer.

After a little more search among the papers, he drew forth a long dust-defiled roll; then he replaced the different packets, closed the drawer, and re-arranged the deeds, parchments, and red-taped rolls of more modern days; with that slow deliberation with which we sometimes loiter and linger, before opening a most interesting communication. Then the iron doors were closed—the key turned with some difficulty in the hard grating lock—the covering of the lock replaced, and fastened by a secret spring; the key deposited in the inner drawer of his secretary, the drawer closed deliberately; and then Mr. de Vere sat down, holding the roll in his hand.

He remained musing a few moments, and then slowly unfolding the paper, spread it upon the ample desk before him.

"Survey of the estate of Mount Sorel, —— shire: Its Parks, Forests, Copses, Meadows, Arable land, Tenements, and Hereditaments, its Fisheries, Mines, and Quarries. By order of the Lords Commissioners of the Parliament and People of England; this year of our Lord 1649. Done by William Hodson, Surveyor and Draughtsman, Helen-court, St. Mary Axe, London."

There it lay before him; all its magnificent extent figured upon that little plan.

Its long line of woods, formed of secular trees, many of them now, indeed, cut down; its wide, extended fields, pastures, and meadows; its winding river—its chain of fish-ponds; its lines marked—"Here lead, it

is supposed, may be found—Here marble was quarried in the reign of Harry VIII—A vein of coal is said to have run in this direction—Ancient Tilery, Marl pits," &c., &c.

But he stooped his head low to the paper, and bent intently over one small black mark.

"Ancient ruin of the Castle and Keep of De Vere and Mount Sorel, demolished in the troubles of 1460, under our sovereign Lords, King Henry VI. and Edward IV." "Site of the manor-house of Mount Sorel, erected by Sir Ralph de Vere, Knight-banneret, A. D. 1557." Round this was, marked by a green space of great extent, "Ancient Deer park," bounded by the windings of the river. "Druids' Wood," "Woden Firth," "Bevis Copses," were marked upon the different long lines of wood that stretched on all sides of the mansion, and ancient ruin: while, "Garden," "Orchard," "Stables," "Tennis-court," "Bowling-green," &c., showed that Ralph de Vere had not neglected creature comforts, or the means of country sports, when he erected his new manor-house.

The acreage amounted to two thousand acres, all included;—and Mount Sorel was to come to the hammer.

To purchase it—to possess it—to escape the disgrace, as he felt and thought it, of suffering this estate again to pass into the hands of the stranger. . . . . Mr. de Vere, as he slowly folded the roll, and replaced it—not in its original dark receptacle, but in a drawer nearer at hand—felt to be as an absolute necessity, as an im-

perative duty imposed upon him—one that could not be evaded.

He had never, in his life, visited the place; but in crossing the country, it was impossible that he should not have seen its long line of dark woods covering the hills; and at intervals have discerned the high-peaked manor-house crowning the beautiful verdant slope on which it stood. And now, the contemplation of the survey excited his imagination to the highest degree. So noble a possession! He had forgotten, indeed had never known, the wealth it promised, beyond the precious, precious relics of his family history which it enclosed. A tradition of the old castle had existed in the family; but who had ever had the heart, for years, to examine the Survey, by order of the Lords Commissioners of the Parliament and People of England; locked up, with all the papers connected with the ruinous law proceedings arising from it? It was probably a century since that iron drawer had even been opened.

That these traces of his ancient descent—these very footsteps of his ancestors still unerased—that another should possess them!

That they might still be his! . . . .

He fell into a deep reverie. His mind was too much excited to reflect upon the means by which the possession was to be obtained: he was already, in thought, the actual possessor: for he felt, that, as it was impossible it should be any one's else than his own—as, at any cost, and at any sacrifice, he must obtain it—

that it *was* his already. How complacently did his eye, as he paced his terrace that evening, turn to those well-known, brown hillocks; those obscure tufts of broken underwood; those faces of bare rock; which, to him, so distinctly defined a boundary, unobserved by every one else.

With what fresh accession of pride and dignity did he take the hand of his little daughter; whom he now regarded with a certain reverence, as the heiress of all this; and walk slowly with her up and down the gravel walk:—the demure little thing, most good and obedient to her father, whom she had ever been taught to regard with the deepest reverence, walking, patiently and composedly, by his side; as if she had, in truth, been that dry, uncharactered piece of dignity, he wished and expected her to prove.

Indeed he soon forgot the presence of his poor little prisoner; absorbed as he now began to be, with plans for accomplishing his purposes.

Money he had very little; every thing but money, he seemed already to possess. He had land, he had timber, he had houses, he had plate, he had jewels, he had pictures,—he had every thing but a large sum of money in the funds, or in his banker's hands. This he had not; and he had never much cared about it before.

Mrs. de Vere's fortune had, it is true, consisted in part of personal property; but the money he had received with her had been employed in paying off incumbrances upon the De Vere estate; the rest of her fortune was invested in land, and was settled upon herself. To part with an acre of his own family estates for

the sake of this new acquisition, was not for a moment to be thought of. Accumulation is the object of the proud—exchange is no gratification of their wishes. Neither did Mr. de Vere choose to cut down his timber; his woods were regularly thinned and trimmed, and his woodman's account afforded a certain annual revenue; but a fall of timber would have been an affront to his pride, not to be for a moment contemplated; to buy at a sacrifice, such as he would have regarded any transaction of this nature, was to do nothing. It was as an object of pride that he coveted this new possession—the aim would have been defeated by means commercial, and calculating as these.

His hoards of plate tarnishing in his strong room—his antique jewels, many of which, too ancient in their setting to be used, were laid unreckoned aside—his choice collection of pictures,—the same objection was open to all. There would have been a species of traffic in the conversion of these relics; a sort of blasphemy in the suffering them to be sold, utterly inconsistent with his way of thinking or feeling.

One plan alone remained—to sell his wife's estate, and mortgage Mount Sorel for such part of the purchase money as he should be unable thus to obtain.

To part with her estate—her father's estate—the place she was tenderly attached to by a thousand endearing ties—*that* was indeed a trifle. How idle were these mere local attachments! What nonsense, to make the slightest hesitation about sacrificing such empty imaginations! Could any thing be more weak? She would in all probability not hesitate to oblige him; but if she

did, could any thing, by possibility, be more senseless, selfish, and unreasonable;—to indulge such weakness could not be thought of for a moment. His wife's estate—of course he would give her trustees proper security—no reasonable being could make a difficulty about it.

So we reason on the prejudices and inclination of others!

His wife's estate!—Of course, that must go.

CHAPTER III.

The glories of our birth and state
Are shadows, not substantial things;
There is no armour against fate;
Death lays his icy hand on Kings.
Sceptre and crown,
Must tumble down,
And in the dust be equal made,
With the poor crooked scythe and spade.

SHIRLEY.

IT was perfectly true—Mr. Entwistle was dead; and he had left his affairs in the most horrible disorder. Every thing saleable was sold in a very short time, the estate was to come into the market by and by.

In spite of the splendid impression any one might have received of its value and capabilities, from the Survey under the Lords Commissioners, it was not a very saleable property.

It had been excessively neglected and ill-managed, and was in a state of the greatest possible disorder. Rack-rented tenants had rack-farmed the tenements; the ill-fenced woods had been infested by all the stray cattle

in the county; the unpruned and unthinned timber had run to decay, the old trees impeding the growth of the young; the buildings were all tumbling to pieces; and as for the tradition of the mines, it seemed to have been lost; at least, not a word was said about them by any one. The careless, reckless race who had possessed this property; mighty hunters, from father to son—hard drinkers—rakes while they were young, and sots when they were old; had taken little heed of records or of surveys. The title deeds, happily for the creditors, were found in an old box at the banker's; but these once in possession, nobody troubled themselves much about any thing else.

Mr. de Vere, in silent satisfaction, began to feel sure that with a little caution on his own part, in concealing the ardent desire he cherished to possess Mount Sorel, he should not only accomplish his wishes; but at an expense very far indeed below that which he had at first anticipated. In short, that the sale of Mrs. de Vere's property would supply funds amply sufficient for the purpose.

For two years did this reserved, patient, and determined man conceal within his breast the purpose which occupied his thoughts, almost without intermission: filling up each vacant moment with schemes and imaginations—with those delightful airy castles—snares to the wisest and the best.

His solitary walks had been, until now, almost altogether confined to the terraces of his garden; where, pacing up and down, the silent, melancholy man might most frequently have been found. He was not of an

active, stirring temper; and though he was both too proud, and too prudent, to suffer his own estate, like that of his neighbour, to be wasted by improvidence or negligence, yet his home concerns were chiefly intrusted to his very faithful old steward, who,—though, from the glimpse I have given you of him, he may appear to your modern ideas far below the situation he held,—was quite equal to it.

The change which universal education has produced, is, in many respects perhaps rather apparent than real: and, I am sometimes tempted to ask, with Tieck, how far we are substituting shadows for realities:—how far the real education from *things*, may not be preferable to the apparent education from their images;—how far the book being substituted for the action—that is to say, the experience of others in place of our own—may not tend to form a certain showy superficiality, so to speak, which appears, to my old prejudices, to be the defect of our times.

This remark is particularly addressed to the women of the lower classes, among whom, I should say, I have observed the greatest tendency to this defect. I have been shocked to see how frequently these denizens of the school-room, adorned with coloured maps and scientific diagrams, are really inferior to what their mothers used to be, in all those qualities essential to the well-being of human life; in that direct, vigorous action; that sober, sound good sense, that were once so common among them. When I see these slip-slop pseudo-ladies, in their *dresses*,—their fashionable sleeves, their tight-fitting bodies; their hair dressed and bound with velvet,

or covered with a dirty, showy cap of cheap lace and flimsy muslin,—I cannot help contrasting them with their predecessors, in the clean, stiff-quilled mob cap; the wholesome linsey-wolsey petticoat; the short, striped bedgown, so admirably suited to facilitate labour; and the check apron, tied clean and compact round the smart, vigorous form.

Education, as we call it; meaning shutting up children in school-rooms, and teaching them to read; has, I believe, had a great effect in improving the average morals: for the habit of doing nothing very wrong is, at least, in most cases, acquired by being kept so many hours out of mischief: but something is yet wanting to form the *man*, and more still to form the *woman*. It is difficult to supply to the latter that domestic training which the household life supplies; but something ought to be done to resist that spirit of *finery* which pervades our society in all its ranks; 'sick with it from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot.' A spirit which makes people *ashamed* of their duties; leading them to regard the very incapacity of fulfilling them, as a proof of a superior refinement and delicacy, and a distinction upon which they actually pique themselves, as on something peculiarly admirable and desirable.

I have seen silly women of fashion proud of not being able to bear the sight of blood,—abandoning to the hireling the care of those they loved under the most pressing and dangerous circumstances; and vain of their weakness. I have witnessed precisely the same species of false pride in a cottage, not very long ago. I

see young ladies too delicate, or too enlightened, to waste their hours on domestic duties; just as I have seen a woman sweeping the house in a flounced skirt, and a pair of tight fashionable sleeves.

This is a long, tedious digression .... as the Irishman says in the postscript, "Don't read it, if you don't like it."

Mr. de Vere's steward was not of this modern school; what he knew, he knew well; for he had learned by action and experience. He knew how to govern men; and he kept those under his direction in due subservience. Moreover, he loved and honoured the master he served; for he had been taught from childhood to reverence his superiors—to pull off his little cap and make a bow, when those bearing the mere externals of superiority passed him—a sort of habitual reverence of the heirarchy of ranks, which seems to me not undesirable, so long as ranks continue to subsist; because, I think, nothing degrades the *man* like contempt for the master he serves. Nothing can ennoble the position but the habit of reverencing the being to whom your time is devoted;—if you can love him, still better; but, by all means respect him—respect him as a man, if possible; respect him as a rank, at all events.

So strongly does this sentiment seem implanted in human nature, that, perhaps, no quality excites the attachment of an inferior so much as that of *dignity*. We see cold, reserved, and even haughty characters, exercising an influence over the minds of their inferiors and dependants, which we contrast, in painful sur-

prise, with the insolence and ingratitude, which more good-natured and facile characters too often meet. This arises from ignorance and want of penetration on the part of the vulgar; but it proves what I say,—that they require to have their imaginations elevated; and when they serve, to serve with honour; or to honour those they serve.

Mr. de Vere was of this reserved and cold temper, but his manner was dignified in the highest degree. Every one feared him; it would be hard to say why, for his politeness was habitual; his self-command unfailing; he was rarely surprised into a rude or contemptuous expression. But we were all, in some degree, in awe of him. As for his servants, his slightest word was law; they served him better than any one else was served, loved him, and never left him.

The attachment of the old steward was devoted; and his whole time and thought employed in the furtherance of his master's interests. He might be seen, the silver-haired old man, mounted upon his white poney, visiting every corner of the estate. Not a fence was suffered to be twenty-four hours out of repair; not a labourer to waste his time in idleness and negligence: the whole was one system of sterling, methodical, persevering, good order. Experimental farming was not then, in general, the order of the day. There was, doubtless, a too obstinate adherence to the practices of their ancestors in these steady old characters; accustomed to follow one routine, and to devote their energies to the carrying that out in its perfection of details. But every age has its good and its evil. We pay for the advances we make; as we

progress, how many graces and virtues drop from our side. Yet we have faith in progress, nevertheless—it is the law of our existence—and we have faith in the great Ordainer of that law.

And the garrulous tedious old man has taken all this time, and in this discursive method has told you,—why it was not necessary that Mr. de Vere should be for ever on the watch himself; and why he might indulge with impunity his habit of musing, as he paced in solitude the terraces of his gardens.

Few people watched him at such times, for he detested being either watched or followed; his wife rarely shared his moments of retirement. He had loved her but little; correctly speaking, done little more than tolerated her, as the necessary appendage to those pecuniary arrangements of his father, which would liberate him, in some degree, from that weight of accumulated debts and mortgages which had so long oppressed his family. She, as I have said, consoled herself with her daughter, from whom she was scarcely ever separated.

Wherever the young, light figure of Clarice was to be seen glancing through the green shrubs of the garden, you were sure, soon after, to meet the pale, gentle mother, quietly walking, or sitting tranquilly under a tree.

Mrs. de Vere was a woman of few words, and of still fewer caresses; the warm current of her affections had been early chilled, and had gathered round her heart. A smile of gentle fondness—a hand passed over the silken tresses of her daughter—a few syllables of quiet, soft raillery addressed to her now and then—these were the

principal evidences of the deep, fervent idolatry with which she worshipped her.

Clarice was of a more demonstrative character. How often have I seen those beautiful slender arms twisted fondly round her mother's waist, as she sat, Clarice kneeling by her side—the young and beautiful creature prattling away in all the gay animation of her confiding temper! She was at this time fifteen. She was tall of her age—though you must not picture her to yourself as *too* tall—she was of a medium height; but the beautiful slenderness of her limbs and figure made her appear taller than she was; a defect I look upon as a great beauty. She was *excessively* beautiful, too;—of that undefined essential beauty, which lies not in features, not in colours, not in forms, not altogether even in expression; but in the ineffable harmony of the whole;—harmonised by that bright spirit, instinct with that pure being, that soul, that love, that music breathing in the face, which constitute our ideal of the angel. If ever there were angel upon earth, it was my Clarice.

Our relations had varied very little of late years. In me, the unformed youth, with all his strange contrasts, had settled down into the young man—had subsided into that form and temper which was henceforward to be *me*. I had not well known what to make of myself, during my years of transition. I had had few opportunities of comparing myself with others; and the bigness of my proportions, the heavy lumpiness of my frame, had hampered, as it were, my own imagination. I could not tell what to make of the face and form my

mirror presented; it did not seem in the least to belong to the creature I felt myself really to be; for I was, in fact, made up of enthusiasm and imagination.

My fancy was filled with forms of loveliness and grace. From my earliest infancy, my little secret heart had worshipped the beautiful, wheresoever found. I had been used, a little child, to hang enraptured over a tiny cave, lined with green and golden moss, and pranked with dew; to spend days of exquisite felicity, might I but sail my little fleet of tulip-leaves upon a clear pebbly brook, that—ah, blest child!—ran through my father's garden; to sit down with my maid, content and quiet, peering into the flowers she had gathered for me; peeping into their coloured cups and bells, in a perfect ecstasy of delight.

As I grew older, the boy would steal out on a stormy night, to watch the wild rocking of the pines against the dark lowering sky, his heart swelling to the grand and the sublime; or would walk on the calm summer evening, alone and undisturbed, while the pale star of evening shone in tears; his eye plunging into the blue depths of the awful heavens, endeavouring to follow the dread idea of the Almighty to his throne. "But oh! thou mighty mind, whose powerful word said, thus let all things be, and thus they were—where shall I seek Thy presence? How, unblamed, invoke Thy dread perfection?"

Such had been the boy—with images such as these was his being fed—and in what a covering had it been enshrined!

The mind does, however, certainly, in some de-

gree, contribute to shape the body—and my frame had now lost much of its uncouth appearance. Still it was not significant of much refinement. My limbs were still those of a son of earth—long and well enough proportioned, but too muscular and heavy. My face was the same, the features were regular and well enough; my complexion neither good nor bad; but all was loaded; there was too much matter every where, and too little expression. I was a very good looking sort of young man; with a face and figure that could interest no one. I was slow and deliberate in all my motions; of sparing speech and few gestures; and under all this, the fires of Etna were burning.

Clarice treated me with the most affectionate cordiality. My intense love of the beautiful; my deep enthusiasm for the great and for the good; my even childish fondness for the gay and pretty; in much of this, particularly in the latter, she thoroughly sympathised. The childish fancies in which we both indulged found words—those deeper sympathies were, with me, as secret things; they never could find words; but we spoke of them by the eyes.

When we worked together at the grotto, or planted in the flower-garden, we talked with animation of what we were about; and our raptures over a tulip, or over the graceful gambols of her does and fawns, were openly expressed. When we walked upon the terrace, in a still moonlight night, we were silent; I pressed her arm gently to my bosom, and that was all; but my heart was full to overflowing—I asked no other happiness from the great author of all. She was too

young for imaginations still dearer to disturb the serenity of my feelings.

For those few years—that pure felicity which I then experienced—let me be for ever grateful. Few, in this life of feverish existence,—this mysterious, wayward, inexplicable dream,—are privileged to begin with Paradise.

Her mother and I were also the greatest friends—and yet, how little passed between us! How little was ever said, as I sat by her side with my book in my hand, not reading—but with my finger between the pages, looking forward over those gardens; and towards that beautiful purple heathy hill before us! Women did not read much in those days; so, that abundant conversation, that flow of varied interests and ideas, which we now enjoy in their society, was rare. Young men, in the general, read little enough too but I was a reader by nature. I was a devourer of books. Mrs. Fermor added little to the gaiety of the party; she was the most silent of the whole; she was like the silent woman: she seemed there only to take care of us all; to sit the personification of quiet propriety among us: but she was an excellent, a sensible, and a really clever person; and the education she gave Clarice was a sound and wholesome one; composed of just views, strong principles, and healthy sensibilities. She turned her out a pure, unsophisticated, right judging, right feeling, gay, happy, healthy girl; perfect, as was the outline of that fairly proportioned form, springing elastic from the earth on which she trod.

While we sat under the plane-tree; while we made

and unmade the walls of our grotto; and sauntered, and talked; while I read, and they netted and knotted; Mr. de Vere was, as I said, left to the solitary life he loved.

If any one had chosen to observe him, they might have seen that he now, after one or two turns upon the terrace, usually went through the gate which I have described as terminating it, and strolled into the woods beyond. These woods had not been laid out in walks; they were damp and gloomy; a thick underwood rendered them almost impervious to the sun; they were dark, close, and heavy. We never went there; nor did Mr. de Vere do any thing now, but pass through them, by a narrow path terminating in a small rail and little bridge, crossing the stream which I have described as traversing the valley; and which, at this place, formed the boundary between the two estates.

The opposite side was overhung by a dark, deep wood, of the same description as the one I have spoken of; and traversed, likewise, by one narrow, solitary foot-path.

Here, unmarked by human eye, and fearless of observation, did the proud and solitary man cross over, and enter upon the long-forbidden territory..... Through devious woodland windings did he thread his way, till he reached the brow of that steep beneath which stood the ruined castle of his fathers. Down that red, precipitous rock which faced it,—hung with creeping shrubs and the tall, waving, wiry grass,—he gazed. There stood the hoary ruin beneath .... the crumbling towers; the relics of broken and defaced windows; their beautiful

stonework of frames and arches, clustered over by the ivy and traveller's joy. The grass was waving on its battlements; the dull wind sweeping through the innumerable tendrils of the shrubs that sprung from its crevices; the dull clouds sweeping over the leaden sky—all silent! No sound but of the wind, as it tossed the branches of the woods around him. All still, mournful, dreary, and deserted—as a solitary grave.

So had he seen it the first time, on his first visit.

He looked round.—Beneath, at some little distance, lay the mansion, which in comparison might be called modern,—the mansion of Sir Ralph,—with its fantastic peaked roofs, its inner courts, and all the intricacies of its plan, displayed to the bird's-eye view; looking like a small city rather than a mansion.... but all was equally silent there. A spiral of thin blue smoke issuing, from one chimney alone, showed that it was not entirely uninhabited; some one yet remained to watch over it; but all was still as death, except that at intervals the hoarse baying of a large house-dog might be heard. The lawns were neglected and rough with briars and grass; the gates close shut; it was a picture of desolation.

Had it been thus forsaken for *him?* Was it to prepare for *his* return that those hateful, desecrating inhabitants, on whom his imagination could never dwell without loathing, had departed?—All vanished!—All dead!

It had reverted, as it were, to the law—to the grave, calm, sacred law. Silent under that holy protection, there it lay; until, from the hands of its ministers, he should receive it.

The long interval, during which it had been lost to

his house, disappeared to his imagination. He felt as if the cherished possession had never, really, been alienated; he looked upon it, as one looks upon a beloved home, which circumstances have forced us to surrender to the temporary occupation of strangers. They are gone—every footstep is hastily obliterated—and all the previous associations with the past renewed.

A path down one side of the steep led to the ruin. The burial place of his ancestors was there. Bursting with a hasty determination through nettles and brambles, he came at length to the Chapel.

The roof had not here entirely fallen in, and a beautiful gothic western window was still nearly entire. The sun breaking suddenly through the rock, illuminated, as he entered, the landscape beyond. The window hung over a precipitous face of rock, and commanded the far-spreading champaign. How gloriously beautiful! A noble 'Claude Lorraine' of plains, woods, and far-stretching distance, melting into the blue horizon of the Welsh mountains; the foreground skirted by the dark, waving forests, rather than woods, and fine swelling banks of the domain, as they fell in bold outlines to the plain below.

He stood amazed with the beauty of the place.

Then he turned to survey the interior of the chapel. It was paved where he stood with the tombs of his ancestors; the brass indented figures of warrior, prelate, abbess, châtelain, were beneath his feet. On one side, near the wall of what had once been the choir, reposing upon a magnificent gothic tomb, lay the effigy

of a knight; his crossed limbs testify to the crusade; his falchion by his side—his mailed hands clasped in prayer. The sun fell bright at that moment upon the time-stained marble.

On the opposite side, decked in flowing robes, sculptured with that dignity and truth which fill us with marvel at those wondrous days—a prelate; a Cardinal —as his hat, lying by the side of the kneeling figure, gave evidence.

Mr. de Vere was well learned in the history of his house. No one could have instructed him as to the qualities, actions, or dignities of those who had preceded him. But to find the vestiges of their existence thus preserved; to stumble, as it were, upon these realities; to see the effigies of the very men lying there substantially before him! It is not easy for one who has not experienced the pride of ancestry, to picture to themselves his sensations.

But fancy him, that tall, thin, dignified man, alone, in that ruined chapel; these two beautiful monuments lying before him gilded by the beams of the declining sun; but the sky mournful, dark, and cloudy, as his fortunes. The wind moaning among the green tendrils of the plants, which clustered round the hoary ruins; moaning, in his ear, like the dirge of the departed.

It was very long after the first announcement of Mr. Entwistle's death, and not till the law had taken the business into its own hands, and it was very certain that the estate was to be sold for the benefit of the creditors—not until Johnson had assured him that the

mansion was utterly forsaken, and old Goodman Grey and his wife the sole inhabitants—that Mr. de Vere had trusted himself to pay this visit.

But having once paid it, I believe the greatest part of his time, during the ensuing twelve months, was passed in the domain. He already appropriated it entirely; and though he was chiefly occupied in meditating upon plans for the future, he could not altogether forbear, when he visited the ruins, from pruning, with his large woodman's knife, redundancies that he thought might be hurtful; or, with his aristocratic hands, from restoring, here and there, a fallen ornament to its place.

In his study it became his daily amusement to trace in the book which contained his family records, the half-defaced names upon the brazen-plated tombstones; noting with his pen in the margin, the precise situation in the chapel which they occupied.

Nor were his examinations confined to the ruins; he soon found that he might venture undiscovered to explore the woods; might linger among the lonely glens, gaze upon the fine expanse of water before the mansion; and even feed the swans that sailed upon its surface. He contemplated the splendid modern edifice, and its surrounding domain, with feelings of pride and complacency not to be expressed.

The bitterness of that secret fountain which had long lain sealed in his heart, was changed, as by the prophet's rod, to a spring of sweet and peaceful waters—swelling up to tranquillity and joy.

His countenance became serene and more than ever

dignified; and though still silent—perhaps even more reserved, more separated than ever from his family, by this treasured secret in which he allowed of no communion—there was a gentle repose, a peace, a calm satisfaction in every tone and gesture, which quickly spread its influence over those around him, conferring a sense of happiness which had not been felt before.

Strange! that in all this time, one syllable upon the subject—except as far as a few inquiries from Johnson as to the fact of the property being upon sale, went—never passed his lips. He did not once allude to the subject either to his wife, or to his daughter—they had heard of Mr. Entwistle's death, and had been both of them shocked with the manner of it, and this was all.

What would be done with the estate they had never even inquired. It was to them, as any other large estate in the county; it marched with Holnicote, that was all they knew of it. They were ignorant even of the precise situation, of the boundary line. The history of its earlier connexion with his family had never been alluded to by Mr. de Vere before his wife. He was not communicative by nature we have seen—and he held his wife as one incapable of sympathies of this high sort. He looked upon her as belonging to a different sphere from his own, and he even felt a kind of delicacy in not speaking of his family to her. His daughter was too young, at present, to be initiated into these traditions of his house.

The time would come—and Mr. de Vere had long looked forward to it with a sort of sad solemnity—when the story of their wronged and fallen house

should be told..... Now the bright and glorious resurrection to its pristine splendour, should round the tale.

Mr. de Vere was proud of his daughter—who but must have been proud of the high-born beautiful girl. So proud was he, that he had long ceased to regret that he had no other heir. Some youth with pretensions equal to her own should unite his destiny with hers; the name should be preserved, either wreathed with another as renowned, or merging one less dignified in its own splendour, and a title should crown those beautiful brows with a coronet.

Less than that, the house of De Vere would not accept, nor even *that* in its late fallen position. The De Veres had decided to remain in their present condition, first among the gentry of England, unless a change in their fortunes could enable them to add lustre to a higher. Now——!

Such were his dreams!

CHAPTER IV.

> For Love it knows it is a greater grief
> To bear Love's wrongs, than Hate's known injury.
>
> SHAKSPEARE.

MR. DE VERE was rather a dilatory man, but he had not neglected, very early in this business, to write to his confidential solicitor in London; and confide to him his views with regard to Mount Sorel. And he had desired Mr. Lawson to keep a careful watch upon all the proceedings of those interested in the disposal of the estate. It was by the advice of this solicitor, esteemed a very shrewd and intelligent man, that he had remained so long apparently passive in the matter.

Mr. Lawson assured him that the property was of a species not at all saleable. Its extent, its remoteness from any of the large towns, now rapidly springing up in England; the state of decay and disorder into which it had been suffered to fall; the very name and character of its late possessors; were against it. He named a very moderate sum at which he expected that he should be able to obtain it, when the day of sale should arrive, if this part of the business were left entirely to his

management. To this Mr. de Vere most readily consented; he hated all the details of business, and usually entrusted all that to his professional advisers.

At length, a letter from Mr. Lawson summoned him from his fond reveries into action.

"Furnival's Inn,

"SIR, April 24, 1788.

"I am assured that the managers in the affairs of Mr. Entwistle, have resolved to bring the Mount Sorel estate into the market, early in the course of this current spring. They will endeavour to dispose of it by private contract; if not successful, it is to be put up to auction in the course of the ensuing summer. There is abundance of time, therefore, to treat.

"I have hinted to my friend, Mr. Biggs, that I have a purchaser in petto for him; and he has promised me that I shall have the earliest information of any offer being made, that we may come down with ours in due season. They seem, however, to anticipate nothing of the sort; and appeared not a little pleased at the prospect of realising in the course of the year.

"I understand people are clamorous to have things settled; the state in which Entwistle left his affairs, proves to be that of the most horrible confusion which has occurred for some time, in the annals of business. There seems to be a general persuasion that the estate would prove rather a source of expense than revenue to any purchaser. And the expected sale excites no interest. I believe we shall get it for an old song.

"However, it is perhaps now time to inquire in what quarter we are to look out for the necessary funds; and what part of your present property you mean to render available for these purposes.

"I am, Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"RICHARD LAWSON."

The day after the receipt of this letter, Mr. de Vere approached his wife, as she sat netting under the plane-tree in the garden; and with a certain grave solemnity, desired her company in his own room.

She rose and obeyed the unusual summons. The private apartment of Mr. de Vere was no place for the happy unrestrained confidence of two friends, united as man and wife ought to be—no happy exchange of plans and cares, of mutual anxieties and mutual hopes—no tears of sorrow, or of bliss, had ever been shed together, there. Almost an exile from her husband's heart, Mrs. de Vere was a perfect stranger in his private sitting-room. He led the way; and opened the door of that shady and gloomy chamber, in which so much of his time had been spent; endeared to him, if by nothing else, by those secret confidences—if I may use the strange expression—with his own soul, that there had taken place.

Those gloomy moments of disappointed pride; those dark melancholy meditations on the fallen fortunes of his house, as circumstances would call them into contrast with the splendid progression made by others, with claims, in his opinion, far inferior. . . . . How

many bitter moments had there been occupied in censure of the changes society is hourly and necessarily making! Thoughts but too common with those who can do nothing but look back; and who in the hourly progression of things, can discern only what is lost.

They cling to the prescriptions of the past with tenacity, under the impression that they are founded in the eternal laws of justice. And they deprecate change, not, as is supposed, from the calculations of mere selfish advantage; not from dread of what they may themselves personally lose; but as one regards the destruction of some sacred time-hallowed edifice, which, be it upon his neighbour's land, he cannot see levelled without feelings of the deepest regret. The tall husband walked majestically first, the gentle wife followed timidly. When she entered he closed the door after her, and presenting a chair with a sort of ceremonious politeness, took one opposite to her.

He paused, and seemed to hesitate a short time, before he spoke. He was going to ask something, in the nature of a favour, from his wife. He was uncertain whether to demand it haughtily, as a right of the superior, or to accept it as an obligation. This sort of uncertainty in his feelings, rather than in his thoughts, threw a more than ordinary coldness into his manner, as he at length began:

"Mrs. de Vere, I have requested the favour of your company for a few moments to enter with you upon a business of considerable importance to me—and one, in which circumstances have rendered your co-operation necessary."

"I am sure," she said in a subdued voice, "Mr. de Vere knows me too well, not to feel certain of my co-operation, in any matter that regards either his interest or his happiness."

"I flattered myself that I should find it so. . . . . The business in question relates to the purchase of an estate—once belonging to my family; and forfeited, under circumstances of the most execrable injustice, during the great rebellion. The loss of a property so considerable, struck at the root of our prosperity. . . . . The house of De Vere may be said to have merely vegetated since then. An opportunity now occurs, and in the most favourable circumstances, of restoring this property to my family and name; but such are the depressed resources which the changes of society have left this once powerful house, that to carry out our most legitimate purposes is no longer within our power.—We are necessitated to have recourse to the assistance of strangers."

The word stuck at her heart, with a pang not altogether new. She had felt, ever since her marriage, that she was but a tolerated stranger in the haughty family she had entered.

She said nothing, and he continued,

"These things are bitter.—Humiliation is the painful lot of many a time-honoured house in these days of many changes—but let me not dwell upon such feelings. I have, in this instance, to apply to you, madam, and to request your assistance in obtaining the means of accomplishing an object,—to me, the most desirable in this world."

"I shall be happy," she said, faintly, "I shall be very glad——"

"I thank you, Mrs. de Vere, for this ready acquiescence. I have ever found you obliging and amiable—I thank you."

She had long ceased to love him as she once had done—love can never continue to subsist, in its first strength, without a reciprocation of tenderness—but this haughty coldness, even while receiving her acquiescence, an acquiescence he seemed scarcely to condescend to ask, hurt her. She felt a sudden return of those longings for a something kinder, sweeter, dearer, which had rendered her early marriage life so unhappy.

A faint colour spread over her cheek, and faded away; she sat passive and silent.

"The estate," continued Mr. de Vere, not in the slightest degree noticing her emotion, "the estate will prove, I believe, of considerable value; but will, I have reason to apprehend, be sold under circumstances most advantageous to the purchaser..... I say this, in order to assure you that the plan I am about to propose will be conducive to your own interests,—as well as to those of the house which has received you."

"I have ever regarded my interests as the same with your own," said she quietly, but with a certain dignity .... "when I have been permitted so to do."

"It was natural, and it was right,"—was the reply. "I have had no reason to complain of a selfish indifference on your part, to the interests of that name which was

to descend to your children..... The plan, then, which I propose, is briefly this. I have, as you I believe are aware, little or no personal property which can be rendered available for this purchase: the alienation of any of the scanty estates yet belonging to my house, in order to obtain another, would be futile and inconsistent. Nor indeed, were it to be entertained, have I outlying property—this present estate of Holnicote being excepted—which would be more than a mere drop in the bucket: could I prevail upon myself to make the sacrifice—a thing impossible. Every acre that I hold has been the property of my family for centuries.

"The estate," he continued, after a pause, "settled upon you by your father is not open to the same objections. The possessions of a single generation can have no great hold upon the regards or affections of the next: that which was in the market yesterday, we may with little regret see consigned to a purchaser to-morrow..... The property is, I understand, of sufficient value—its situation in the heart of the thriving commercial district where it lies, having rendered it a very marketable piece of land: of sufficient value, I believe, to cover the whole of the purchase I am contemplating. Your trustees would receive that, or this we are upon, in exchange, as the security for your settlement;—and our daughter would inherit the then splendid, undivided property, in a ring fence; in place of estates scattered here and there.

"This is my proposal," he added, with a cold dignity, as if the slightest idea of difficulty or opposition on her part had never crossed his mind.

"My father's estate!" she reiterated, in a tone of dismay.

"And pray, why not?" was the only answer.

"My father's estate!"

There was a pause. She looked excessively distressed, but said no more.

After a considerable silence, during which the most painful emotion seemed to agitate her features, though she sat, as usual, perfectly still:

"Well, madam," he began, almost harshly, "what am I to understand by all this?—Am I to consider these half-muttered exclamations, and this extraordinary silence, as the signal of hesitation with regard to the most reasonable proposal ever made to woman?"

No answer: the most painful mixture of timidity, doubt, and embarrassment, held her silent.

He waited for her to speak; and her lips faintly moved, but no articulate sound passed them.

"Really," he began again, with increased irritation in his tone, "this behaviour is to me perfectly inexplicable. Your countenance is black as night: you will not condescend even to speak, upon an occasion which some women might have hailed with pleasure, as an opportunity, without the slightest sacrifice on their part either of pleasure or convenience—an opportunity of highly gratifying the man with whom they had united their destiny. You are gloomily silent. But the perverseness of your sex," said he, turning angrily away, "meets, encumbers, and perplexes us, in every course of action. Will you, however, have the goodness at least to explain the source of this prodigious

discontent and uneasiness, which I read in your countenance?"

"Oh, Mr. de Vere!" she began, in a deprecating tone of voice.

"Well?" sternly.

"Oh, Mr. de Vere!" now raising her eyes imploringly and timidly to his face, "do not ask me to do that which I feel that I ought not."

"When I ask you to do that which you feel that you ought not, it will be time enough for these displays of sensibility," said he, haughtily. "Be pleased to say when before, or how at this moment, you have ever had reason to suppose that *I* would ask of human being, to do that which they ought not? I do not understand you, madam."

"I do not mean—pray, do not misconceive me so—I do not mean that you would influence me to any thing you *thought* dishonourable"—

"I should think not," interrupted he, with a haughty laugh.

"But, perhaps—I cannot explain myself—perhaps that may appear very wrong to my feelings, which may not seem so to yours."

"Very probably, madam; our feelings on most subjects seem destined never to sympathise."

"My father," said she, becoming more courageous as she warmed to the subject, "bought this property; it was the delight of his life to adorn and to improve it; it was the delight of his old age to believe, that I, his only daughter, loved it as he did; and that no consideration on earth should tempt me to alienate it.

He flattered himself, that his generosity to me, in other respects, would render a regard to his wishes, in this one, consistent with"—

"Do you mean to reproach me, madam, with what you brought me?" said her husband, colouring. "Am I to be taunted with the few paltry thousands for which my father—sold me," he was about to say, but he had feeling enough, even under his rapidly increasing irritation, to drop at least this brutal termination of his speech.

"Reproach!—Oh, Mr. de Vere!" and the careless indifference with which the hard-earned thousands of her father had been received by the haughty family she had entered, swelled to her heart. She, too, gentle as she was, began to warm with indignation.

She coloured, and was silent.

Mr. de Vere rose, and paced up and down the room. He was endeavouring to conquer the violent irritation he felt at this unexpected opposition to his desires: from the being, too, whose subservience and compliance had ever been without qualification—perhaps too much so—it had amounted to a passiveness, which certainly had tended to diminish the interest he might have been inclined to take in her.

After a quarter of an hour passed in this manner: he, pacing up and down the room, fighting with internal passion; she, sitting perfectly still, endeavouring to keep down her struggling heart, and prevent the tears, which were filling her eyes, from escaping:

He returned to his place; and drawing his chair close to her, said, in a subdued tone,

"Then you absolutely refuse to assist me?"

There was a melancholy, a slight shade of melancholy in the tone, calm as it was, that touched that softest of female hearts; she turned to him—

"If I only knew what was right."....

Alas!—to do what she wished—to listen to the thousand voices of old and tender recollections—to yield to the ties of a thousand affections and associations pulling at her heart-strings—*that* never entered into her thoughts. She was ready, with the self-sacrifice of one spirit-broken, to snap all these, without a hesitation—but a duty! and a duty so sacred as she felt it, to the reverential memory of that father, who, contemptuously as she knew him to have been looked upon, was only the more precious and dear to her—*that* she could not disregard. Her father, it was true, had risen from the lowest condition: but he had been a man to have adorned any condition. His sole defect—and who is perfect—had been a too lofty ambition: the ambition of the imagination. His place, and his daughter, he had idolised. This place was to him as a creation of his genius: it was the form in which his mind had displayed itself; it was his picture; his drama; his divine poem. To destroy it! to piecemeal it! to sell it into the builder's hands! was to ask Milton to sell the manuscript of "Paradise Lost," to wrap up penny pies; Michael Angelo, to pull down St. Peter's to build stables! When he had married his daughter to the son of Mr. de Vere, he had considerably impoverished and embarrassed himself, as she knew, that by a large sacrifice of money he might supply the exigencies of

that decayed but ancient family—without risking the existence of his idol, either then, or hereafter. Had there been two sons, this property was to have been the *appanage* of the second: in default of that, it was to descend with the heir of the De Veres.

He had felt a sort of glory, imaginative man as he was, in assisting to rescue this high, but sinking family from the distress into which it had fallen; he had sympathised in all the wants and difficulties consequent on their high imaginings; why were his to be altogether disregarded? And was it reverend? Was it right in his daughter?—his cherished only daughter, thus to light the torch, which was to consume the little edifice of his pride?

She loved too, ardently loved that home, that most beautiful home, in its then secluded and romantic valley; one of the most beautiful and romantic of Lancashire. Every tree, every stone, every gushing stream, every hoary rock, was dear and precious to her. Alas! her married life had afforded few moments of joy, to detach her from those scenes where her happy childhood had been passed—where she had been adored, loved, idolised, tended, fondled, as a little divinity. Strange contrast with the cold formality which had surrounded her since.

And yet, she had once loved De Vere—tenderly, adoringly loved him—and one softened look, one melancholy accent of his voice, still found an answering chord in that fond woman's heart.

"Alas!" she said, "if I only knew what was right."....

She was relenting—it softened him—he took her hand. Her very opposition had, after all, interested him: this gentle relenting touched his heart.

Touched it enough, to make him undesignedly substitute for his harsh requisitions, the far more dangerous influence of his feelings.

"Right!" he said, "Sophia—could you believe, I would for one instant entertain the idea, of asking you to do that which was not right?"

And then, yielding the whole proud man to the softer influences of nature, he opened his heart to her.

For once his haughty reserve gave way; for once he was surprised into human weakness; for once his true feelings were disclosed. His intense sensibilities, whether justly or mistakenly directed; those deep associations with the past, which throw a dark majestic dignity over thought and action; that melancholy brooding over glory faded, which pales the silent imagination; that deep, earnest purpose to reconstruct, and to restore, which had been the aim and hope of successive generations; frustrated by all sorts of adverse circumstances, but cherished and handed down from father to son, and resting at last, in him, on a character peculiarly fitted to receive such impressions with intensity.—All was disclosed.

He unlocked the sacred recesses where, so long concealed, the relics of the man—the last champion of his house—the miniature of Sir Ralph lay. That noble and beautiful portrait, with the fair love locks hanging on his cheek; his blue armour and his crimson scarf, and the sword of his king in his hand—he drew

forth the sacred handkerchief stained with his loyal blood.

He gave her to read the wailings poured forth by the heir of Mount Sorel, when he wandered round the dwelling of his fathers; now in the possession of a low upstart, who had made a fortune in one of those nefarious ways too common in revolutions, and had purchased it from the parliament. His last poetic lament, as he bade adieu to the halls of his ancestors, and hurried to the fatal field, where he fell.

She read, and the tears of sympathy rolled down her cheeks; she was melted, and she yielded. Her character was gentle and facile; and in this case it was, after all, one duty of the imagination weighed against the other.

Her husband was far from possessing sufficient self-denial to refuse the advantage offered by this moment of confidence; the first, perhaps, that they had ever known. He accepted the concession, but with expressions of gratitude and obligation, which were as new to him as gratifying to her.

He kissed her hand tenderly as she rose to leave the apartment. He then sat down eagerly to his desk, and wrote to his solicitor, ordering him to put all in forwardness for the immediate sale of the Lancashire estate; and to prepare the necessary papers for the completion of all that would be necessary for the satisfaction of his wife's trustees.

Sophia retired to her own room.

Over the chimney-piece hung the picture of her father; beneath it a drawing of Ash Grove.

What had she done!—Could he know, what would he feel, at thus seeing his darling plan and wishes sacrificed by his daughter to the plans and wishes of others? His beautiful Ash Grove disposed of to the careless stranger! Yet what could she do? Could she refuse her husband? Could she sacrifice the happiness of the living to reverence for the dead? And yet, that reverence for his memory which no one else paid!—Alas! Alas!

These feelings may excite little sympathy, and those strong local attachments which influence many, cannot be understood by those who have not felt them; but in this case they were linked with far deeper sentiments. Hers was the pious reverence of a child for the memory of a beloved and excellent father, disregarded by the rest of the world. The purest aspiration, at least—to support, by her own devoted respect, the honourable remembrance of one by others forgotten.

She was weeping when Clarice entered the room.

She often saw her mother sad;—she rarely, if ever, saw her weep.

"My mother," cried she, flying towards her, kneeling before her, wrapping her fond arms round her. "My sweet mother!—what is the matter?"—kissing her tears away.

"My dear, dearest mother—you are crying."

She lifted up her eyes, and smiled sadly upon her daughter. "My sweetest Clarice!—my lovely one!—don't mind me. I am only very foolish."

But Clarice was not so to be put off; she drew from her too facile mother a confession of all that had passed.

She pitied both parents—"Poor papa!—Sweet mamma!—what can be done?"

To go into the hands of strangers—to be defaced and destroyed. Cut in shreds, perhaps, and sold to some speculating manufacturer. These ideas, she perceived, were what added to her mother's regrets.

She could not but sympathise with her father; she felt that to disappoint him was impossible; yet that her mother, her gentle, sweet mother should be suffering—it was the first time Clarice had known perplexity; and in that moment she flew to me.

Happy—thrice happy refuge! for her young anxieties.

I was reading in the hermitage when she flew in.

"What is the matter, Clarice?" for I saw she was hurried and uneasy.

"Oh, Edmund!" sitting down by me, "my poor mother! She is unhappy, and I cannot bear to see her unhappy; and then, my father! he would be so unhappy—and it is so dreadful to see him unhappy." And she related to me what had passed.

If I were to describe the intense felicity with which I sat by, now and then wiping the tears from her cheeks as she went on with her little story, I must possess an eloquence never given to me.

We both of us felt almost equally interested for both Mr. and Mrs. de Vere. We sympathised thoroughly in their feelings. We could not bear that he should be disappointed, in what we both felt to be an acquisition *he must* so intensely desire. Yet, Mrs. de Vere's regret and remorse were equally well understood.

At last, a happy thought glanced into my slow brain. What if I should myself be the purchaser? My heart told me, that to me, Mrs. de Vere would, with less regret, relinquish this property. She knew me—she loved me. She would almost feel as if to a son of her own it were descending.

I knew that the accumulations upon my mother's fortune, which had all been settled upon myself, were large: that my father wished them to be devoted to the purchase of an estate.

Of all the estates in the wide world, this was the dearest to me.

The sunshine chased the clouds from the fair face of my Clarice as I ventured to suggest this idea.

"I am certain if it *is* to be, and *be* it must, that this is what mamma will like of all things. And then papa will be so glad not to pain her. Dearest Edmund! I never *did* come to you without finding comfort. From the time you kissed my little hand, and sucked out the venom of that nasty bee which I caught in the campanula—do you remember me, running roaring to you—from that time to this, you have sucked the sting from every wound I ever had. Dearest Edmund! go to my mother; or, come to my mother—for I will lead you in triumph there. This will set all right, and we shall be so happy."

Her hand was in mine, and she hurried with her most willing captive, to her mother's room.

"Dearest mother!" she said, flinging her arms round her neck, and kissing her. "Here is what will set all right. Edmund will buy your estate."....

"I feel this very sensibly, Edmund," was Mr. de Vere's expression upon the occasion. "I had very great pain in the idea of wounding Mrs. de Vere's feelings; though, I confess, not to me altogether comprehensible; still, it was a very painful thing to occasion her so much pain. This will almost reconcile her, I see, to the idea of parting with her father's property. It is scarcely like a sale."

There remained only to consult my father. His consent and approbation of the plan were speedily obtained. My money was in the funds; I was still a minor; the only thing necessary was, that a proper valuation should be put upon Ash Grove; and my trustees satisfied as to the propriety of the investment.

This matter took up some little time, during which Mr. Lawson remained apparently inactive, though never, for one instant, losing sight of the property.

No attention, however, was paid to it by others; his anticipations were fully justified; and there was every appearance that Mr. de Vere would add very considerably to his fortune, as well as to his happiness and consequence, by this most opportune state of things.

As the money was not yet ready, Mr. Lawson debated only whether it would be most advantageous to make his offer and complete the purchase by private contract, or wait the event of a public auction; which, he expected, would still further justify his opinion of the depreciated value.

He well knew how acceptable to Mr. de Vere it would be, if a few thousands of the money destined for

the purchase should remain, to be employed in turning the acquisition to the greatest advantage.

The next few weeks of delighted expectation were passed in sunshine at Holnicote.

Mr. de Vere's happiness and complacency shone out in every thing he said and did. His pride was of a sort to be softened by its gratification—it was so far of a generous nature—he had been jealous of his dignity in days of comparative adversity; but now, satisfied and at ease, restored to that place which had been so long forfeited, his best qualities were called forth; he was gentle and considerate, where he had been once so cold and austere. His intentions were all this time kept a profound secret; partly from motives of prudence, but chiefly from that sense of secret dignity that renders the heart delicate, which suffers not a stranger to intermeddle with its joy. When the purchase was completed, and he in possession, it would be early enough to call for the congratulations, even of his nearest friends (acquaintance I should say—he had no friend, properly to be called so, but my father). My father was in the secret alone; and with him it was as safe as with Mr. de Vere himself.

But this untold joy irradiated us all.

I had cause, more near and dear, for the satisfaction of my spirit.

What had occurred had drawn me sensibly closer to Clarice. The confidence between us; the tears which I had been suffered to dry; the happy complacency which I had been the blest means of dispensing; gave me a

more comfortable feeling of self-assurance than I had ever felt before.

I was happy, I was at ease, I was in spirits; I conversed with more freedom and gaiety; the lovely creature seemed quite to enjoy my company; and her ideas flowed with fresh brilliancy when we talked together.

How happy were we in that hermitage! She, her mother, I, and Mrs. Fermor—even Mrs. Fermor shared in the general good-humour. She had an odd little whimsical vein of drollery in her composition; and her little dry jokes called forth many a merry laugh from the gay, thoughtless spirit of my Clarice.

CHAPTER V.

Wer wird die Klugheit tadeln? Jeder Schritt
Des Lebens zeigt, wie sehr sie nöthig sey.
GÖTHE.

MR. DE VERE was silent, and never again spoke of his plans to any of us. The subject once settled, it had been dismissed from his conversation; but he was not the less engaged with it.

Not a day passed in which he did not spend many hours, visiting the domain so shortly to be his own.

He had corrected the ancient survey by his own observations; he now amused his leisure by examining the woods. In the close neighbourhood of the house he had never yet been seen: contented with viewing it from the eminence behind the ruins, he had never incurred the risk of being discerned by its present inhabitants; but he wandered, like a spirit, under the hanging trees, and amid the remoter glens and valleys; at his return home making notes of the various improvements which suggested themselves. The more he examined, the more he discovered reason for believing that he would very considerably increase his fortune by this possession. The quantity of timber which *demanded* to be cut down, was very great;—then the mines!

Mr. de Vere was not a sufficiently scientific man to be able to decide whether any certain indications of their existence were to be discovered; but that the hill was rocky, and that the rocks had, in places, slight metallic veins apparent in them, he had ascertained. He had discovered, too, that a right to work the minerals in that particular hill, was secured to the possessors of Mount Sorel, to the exclusion of those of the contiguous estate of Holnicote. This circumstance alone, which he discovered in looking over some old family papers, seemed to confirm the supposition that their existence had been considered at one time a certainty.

One morning he called me into his study. "Edmund," said he, "it is fair that you, who have, by your opportune proposal, contributed so much to advance my wishes, and to our general contentment and happiness, should be the first to be made acquainted with its completion. Read that"—and he put into my hand the following letter.

"SIR,

"The transfer of Ash Grove is completed, and the money lies in your banker's hands. As I anticipate no particular advantage from a further postponement of our final offer to Messrs. Tennison and Biggs, I propose, on Monday the 12th current, to call upon those gentlemen and conclude the business, of which you shall have the earliest notice from,

"Sir,

"Yours, respectfully,

"RICHARD LAWSON."

Mr. de Vere did look at this moment, what I had never seen him look before, a truly happy man.

"I shall say no more, Edmund," said he, as I laid down the letter; "I am a man, you know, of few words; but I only wish it may ever be in my power to show you the esteem and regard I entertain for you; and how thoroughly I feel this obligation."

This was a great acknowledgment from such a man; but he was of too generous a nature to stint his expressions when he really felt obliged.

"You will like to see the plan of the estate, I dare say," he continued, drawing forth the survey by order of the lords commissioners. He pointed to the mark indicating the coal and lead mines. "I have examined these hills," he said, "and as far as I can be a judge,—with the very imperfect knowledge I have been able to glean from books upon the subject,—I feel pretty certain that my hopes, in this respect, will not be disappointed. Should this be the case, the acquisition will indeed prove a source of happiness. Shackled and embarrassed, irritated and annoyed, as I have been, during my whole life, upon the subject of money, to be relieved from the pressure of such anxiety will be indeed gratifying."

He was in a cheerful and communicative humour; his complacency overflowed in a warmth of friendly affection, which he had never experienced before.

He showed me the miniature; he displayed the relics; he opened the genealogical tree of his family. We examined it together. I felt there was something more than usually delightful to me in such little confidences.

It was the father of Clarice, who seemed to select me, from among all the men in the world, as the sole depository of his secret feelings.

We had talked in this way for some time, before I perceived another letter upon his desk, directed to me. It was from my father. He desired me to return home, if possible, that very night, as he wished to speak to me, before leaving home the next day to breakfast at some little distance. "Come, if you can, to-morrow, Edmund," he wrote, "for I rather particularly wish to see you. If you cannot come then, I shall not be able to speak with you till the ensuing evening; when, at any rate, I shall be at home. But I wish you would be with me to-morrow night."

"That is to-night.—I am afraid I must leave you, Sir, immediately after dinner," said I.

"Why, your father is an exact man, and loves to be obeyed without hesitation," said Mr. de Vere. "He is like myself; a man of few unnecessary words, but usually with good reasons. I am sorry we must lose you, Edmund. Come back as soon as you can; you are welcome to every one of us here."

Had he a meaning in this last sentence? My flattering heart divined one.

"I shall do myself the pleasure of visiting you very soon again," I said, cheerfully.

"It will be an interesting moment to us all. You will conceal nothing from your father, Edmund. He is my friend; I have no secrets for him.—The only man on earth, beside yourself, of whom I would say so much."

I was always low when I was to go away; for I lived but in the presence of Clarice. Round her there was as an atmosphere of love and happiness, to which I was accustomed; and she, too, was undisguisedly sorry to part with me.

"It is so provoking," said she, "when to-morrow we were to have set about the new summer-house! And all your pretty plans!" tossing the papers upon the table: "I should like to know who is to understand all this, when you are gone? Dear Edmund! if you could only stay this one evening:—besides, I am positive it is going to rain."

"It has looked dark and lowering these three days," said I, "but rain, or not rain, go I must."

"Ah! that is so like you—whatever you must, you must; but only look now at your father's letter again. I am certain it will do just as well if you get home to-morrow night.—Now do, Edmund."

I seemed to hesitate.

"Is this quite right, Clarice?" said Mrs. Fermor, "Do you not see it is Mr. Lovel's desire, that Mr. Edmund should return, if possible, to-night?"

"But only look at the sky," said she.

"I don't think it will rain," said Mrs. Fermor.

"But if it should—and he get wetted—and, perhaps, have a horrid cold, as he had last winter. Indeed, Edmund, you ought not to go," said she earnestly.

I smiled—I persisted—partly because her desire to detain me was so delightful. I could have persisted in a much more painful duty, to have been thus dissuaded from it.

"My dear," said Mrs. Fermor, "how can you—"

"Ah!" cried she, "you are against me too—but I am not always wrong. Do, Edmund, stay till morning. It will rain and thunder to-night; the clouds are getting up over the woods there. I am never mistaken in the weather—Mrs. Fermor, only look; I am sure, to-morrow will do as well."

But Mrs. Fermor was the advocate of duty.

"Mr. Lovel seems very desirous to see his son, Clarice; and we never know what a day, what an hour may produce." (Well might she say so.) "Have I not told you, my dear, how dangerous it is, in this life, to trifle with what is right—even in small matters. My love, do not accustom yourself to these sort of deviations. Mr. Edmund ought clearly to go. If it should rain, cannot he stop at the half-way house and be with his father before he sets out to-morrow morning?"

"I am certain by the tone of Mr. Lovel's letter, there is no urgency," persisted Clarice, with an obstinacy quite unusual. Had our better angel inspired her? Our fate was hanging by the thread of that hour.

How little can we divine the consequence of some trifling determination! Well might Mrs. Fermor maintain, as she ever did, that in this life, one course alone is sure—to do what is to be done, to-day: to trifle with no duty, to neglect no opportunity: and to leave the future—that dread morrow—to its own cares.

"Oh! fantome muet! oh, notre ombre! oh, notre hôte!
Spectre toujours masqué, qui nous suit, côte-à-côte!
Et qu'on nomme demain."

"If it is likely to rain, however," said she, "as I am quite of your opinion, Clarice, that Mr. Edmund ought not to get wetted—though it seems a very inhospitable sort of saying, I think the sooner he is off the better."

Still I lingered—I had resolved to depart after dinner; but till dinner was over I would not go.

Had I followed the advice of Mrs. Fermor!—

Yet, why lament?—What reason could there possibly be given, why I should not prefer my own? Enjoy a few more hours of the society of my adored one, and get to my father in the evening.

We dawdled away the hours, busy with the summer-house. Dear as she was to me, I did not give her a hint of how soon her father's wishes were to be accomplished; besides, we neither of us had ever seen Mount Sorel; we were attached to Holnicote; and all our little plans and schemes were still confined to the gardens there; we both of us loved them dearly.

Dinner came—and after dinner my horse was brought round. I had no servant: my father's simple habits were my own; he hated parade, indeed his fortune would not allow of it; the allowance made to me during my minority was small: so I had not the habit of expense in any way. I mention the circumstance of my having no servant, because, even that was influential.

Having no servant, I took no great coat; it was too hot to think of putting mine on—though certainly the sky did look more and more lowering—but I thought little of it; I was full of Clarice. She looked so sorry

that I was going away; and so excessively lovely in her gloom—at least, in my eyes—that I could think of nothing else.

When my horse was brought to the door, I rose hastily. Mr. de Vere shook me by the hand; I took that of Mrs. de Vere, of Mrs. Fermor, of Clarice—I ventured to press it with a tenderness, I had never before allowed myself to express. Did she colour—as her eyes fell suddenly? No; she stooped hastily, to pick up a sprig of myrtle that had fallen out of her bosom upon the carpet. Might I flatter myself?....

I mounted my horse and rode away—I thought of little but that soft, mantling cheek; of those beautiful dark eyelashes which shaded it; of that sudden stoop to the floor, which made it, after all, a dubious matter, whether she had coloured at all, or whether it was my fancy.

I rode out of Holnicote Park. The lane I had to take skirted, though at some distance, the woods of Mount Sorel. I saw them sweeping in dark magnificence over the hills; tinted with the gleaming rays of a setting sun, now pouring in splendour from beneath a heavy, black, lowering cloud.

How noble they looked! I felt the most intense desire to turn my horse's head that way, and endeavour to find some road through the park which might not carry me far out of my course.

The woods and the rough moorland which formed part of the domain, stretched to a considerable distance; but no lane seemed to lead towards them; and I rode on till I had left the boundaries of Mount Sorel a mile or two

behind me. Turning now to take one last look of its crested woody hills, I was startled with the tremendous black cloud I saw rising from behind them; at the same time the wind began to howl in fitful gusts; a tempest was evidently gathering. The clouds from all the different quarters of the heavens seemed rushing together, and a loud rattling peal of thunder followed a flash of lightning, which startled both myself and my horse. This was immediately succeeded by a storm of rain and hail that fell clattering violently around me. I breasted the tempest for some little time, but my eyes were blinded; so I made the best of my way, though with some little difficulty, to a small village that was scattered on both sides of the road; and seeing the sign of the Red Lion swinging in the tempest, horse and rider stumbled, as well as they could, up to the hospitable door.

I dismounted, flung my bridle to the red-haired boy, who officiated as hostler, and entered the house.

The landlord, a jolly red-faced son of the spigot, stood ready to receive me.

"A desperate night, Sir," said he, as the rain and hail pelted and rattled over our heads.

"I am wet through," said I, shaking the drops from my coat and hat. "Have you a parlour, and a fire where I can dry my clothes; and wait till the storm is over?"

He opened the door of a very small, but neat parlour, with a casement window and a brick floor; one or two oaken chairs, and a small table.

"This is the only private room, Sir; but we will light a fire immediately."

A blazing fire was soon lighted. I took off my clothes, and they were hung to dry; mine host, from some of his stores, furnishing me with the needful to don in the meantime; in which equipment I made a curious figure enough.

The wind, in loud gusts, shook every casement in the house; the rain continued to fall in torrents, and the hail-stones, as big as pigeons' eggs, made a desperate clatter. I sat by the fire, enjoying its warmth, late as was the season—it was now the month of June: and, forgetting the tempest without, was soon lost in a young man's fond reveries.

I might have sat in this way about half an hour, when I was aroused by the noise of some one stamping his feet in the passage; and the furling, as it should seem, of an obstinate umbrella, which, by the peculiar noise it made, intimated that it had done the last service it intended to perform in this world.

The tones of a loud cheering voice might be now heard calling out, "Hallo, Landlord! Waiter! Boots! Are you none of ye within hearing?" They had clustered round the kitchen fire, and the entrance of the pedestrian had been unnoticed.

"A pretty house you keep, landlord, here. Why, I might have run away with it before any of you had heard a word.—To be sure, this hail and thunder keep such a patter over our heads, that it would deafen the deuce. Well, where's your fire?"

"There, in the kitchen, Sir—there's a fire—or, in the tap."

"Lead away; all's one to me."

"Faugh, what a smell!" he seemed to have retreated after putting his nose into the kitchen. "Are you grilling iron bars?—Why, your kitchen stinks with all the abominable smells that ever were invented, Man. Do you think I can eat my supper in a hole like that?"

The landlord did not seem exactly to know what to think of his guest. I heard him muttering something about the tap.

"Tap!" said the other. "Ay, let's see thy tap."

The landlord opened a door opposite to the one of my little parlour, from whence various sounds of talking and laughing had before come. There was a horrid smell of bad beer and bad tobacco, issued out upon opening it.

The guest drew back again.

"Why, friend, thy tap and thy kitchen are much of a muchness.—Hast thou no parlour?"

"There is a gentleman already in the parlour," said mine host.

"A gentleman! eh?—'One as rides a os'—is that it? Too good company for us foot passengers."

Saying which, he laid his hand very unceremoniously upon the door.

"The gentleman, mayhap, will not like to be disturbed, Sir," said the landlord officiously.

"Won't he! Well, I suppose he'll say so then.—Sir," opening the door, "a most unfortunate pedestrian implores your humanity, to shelter him under your

hospitable parlour roof, from the combined effluvia of tobacco smoke and burnt bacon, which will otherwise drive him mad."

As the door opened, the figure of a man between forty and fifty, with a bright cheering countenance, high nose, hawk eye, coal-black curling short hair, and a figure somewhat above the middle size, presented itself. His dress looked shabby enough; a spencer which he had on, had evidently seen service, and his strong stout shoes, woollen stockings, and corduroys, were of the most ordinary description. Still, the first glance assured me that he was no ordinary mortal; so I rose, and civilly advancing, told him he was welcome to "half my parlour, half my table, two-thirds of my chairs, and as much of my fire as he could get."

"Thank you, Sir," said he; and came in without further ceremony; took off his spencer, displaying a coat of very ordinary cloth, and any thing but a fashionable cut; and laying in a corner a sword-cane, which he carried in his hand, took a chair, spread his knees, and rubbing them before the fire; seemed to make himself quite at home, without further ceremony.

I was standing with a slight expectation that something of the nature of an apology on his part, for intrusion, &c. &c., and "Oh! don't think of it," on mine, was to pass between us; but I found nothing of the sort was intended; so, I too, took a chair, and sat down opposite to my very unceremonious guest.

Puzzling myself with the idea that I had somehow, or somewhere, seen that face, or heard that voice, be-

fore; or something like it—in a dream, perhaps—for the more I looked at him, the less did he resemble any one I had ever known. He was any thing but an ordinary-looking being; he was a very handsome man. His features well defined, his nose high, his mouth small, his teeth remarkably beautiful; and that fine small advancing chin, which gives so much resolution and decision to the countenance; his hawk, penetrating, quick eye, I have already mentioned; it was black, and particularly expressive; his admirably formed head was, as I said, covered with short, close, curling hair: his figure might have been thought square, but it was from the breadth and strength displayed in his chest and shoulders; for he was spare, and his waist remarkably small and well-defined for a man of his apparent age; his limbs were sinewy, and promised at once strength and activity; his hands and feet most remarkably well-made and small.

A more completely handsome middle-aged man, I thought I had never seen; and he looked like a gentleman, too, in spite of the coarseness of his garments, the roughness of his tones, and his evident indifference to the choice of his expressions.

I was at a loss to guess who, or what he could be; travelling on foot in such weather, and at this time of night, without apparent business, or companion of any sort.

The rain continued to pelt violently against the windows.

"A pretty night," he began, rubbing his hands, with

an appearance of cheerful enjoyment, before the fire; "a pretty night, as poor Lear's fool says, 'to swim in.'"

"It seems a most determined bad night," said I.

"So determined, that I shall begin to inquire of mine host as to beds," said he. "Has the *gentleman*," surveying me with something very like a sneer, "bespoken his?"

"I had not thought about it, as yet," I said.

"Then I shall be beforehand with you," putting his hand to the bell. "Hollo! there—you Bridget—Molly—Betsy—what's your name? Have you any clean sheets in this most filthy hostelry of yours?"

"Beds good enough for such as you, belike," answered the girl, pertly.

"Ay, I know your sort well enough," said he; "any hole is good enough for the poor, wearied fellow, who slaves on foot—any flock bed will do for him. But look you here, miss," taking out a well-filled purse, and chinking the gold which shone through it, "the golden bough of Virgil," winking at me. "There, my lass, do you see that? Now, don't I deserve you should be a little civil?"

"Sir," said the girl, "shall I show you our best bed?"

"No; get it ready for me by half-past nine, do you hear?—and put clean sheets on. I'll pay you like a lord—treat me for the nonce as one, can't you?"

"I'll try, at least," said the girl, laughing, and leaving the room.

"Disgusting!" said he, throwing himself back in his

chair. "What a disgusting mass is human nature! What is to be done for these base, dissembling slaves?.... Their very fellows!—Their very fellow-sufferers under the weight of that vile system of corruption which oppresses society,—crushing men, like worms, to the earth,—their very fellows! Why, if that dirty slut thinks a man is but *poor*—but poorer and more wretched than her miserable self—why—she is among the very first to trample upon and despise him..... So it is with them all—one, and all!"

"What better can we expect from the vulgar?" said I.

"The vulgar, Sir!—And who do you style the vulgar?—You Sir, or I Sir, or who Sir?—The man who wants the gold; or the man who values himself upon his gold? Vulgar rascals one and all," said he laughing. "But, however," he continued, "as, for this one night, I chance to be among the more estimable of the earth—those *with* the gold—let us sup like princes!—Let us astonish the weak mind of the landlord!—Let us order as if we rode in our coaches!—Let us rifle his larder!—Let us make a fuss like kings! Lords of the hour!—Hallo, landlord!"

Enter landlord—he had heard of the gold, and he looked civil.

"Well, Sir—what can you give us for supper?"

He had some trout in the house—veal cutlets—a couple of chickens.

"All, and every thing," was the order. "The trout, by all manner of means—the chickens grilled with

mushrooms—and a good homely inn veal cutlet, mind. The best dish in the universe, in my opinion," turning to me.

"Wine, Sir?" said the landlord.

"For this young gentleman, mayhap; water for me."

It continued to rain so desperate, as I have said, that I began to think it was time for me to be inquiring for a bed. So I went out and bespoke one.

"You have done well, Sir," said my new friend; "I am learned in the weather, it will rain all night. I saw the storm drawing up as I crossed Snakehead Moor."

"Landlord," turning to our host, who entered, carrying the first dish of a delicious little supper. "Is it not Snakehead Moor—that high ground which I passed, about two miles west of this?"

"The same, Sir."

"And whose are those woods, that I saw in the distance; right a-head?"

"I suppose you must mean the woods of Mount Sorel," said the landlord.

"Mount Sorel!" repeated I. "How far are we from Mount Sorel?"

"About two miles," was the answer.

And no more was said at the time.

We sat down to supper—the landlord continuing to wait at table.

My friend handled his knife and fork—and ate with a voracity, which he did not attempt to restrain; he gulped down great morsels—supped up his gravy with a relish, and yielded himself to the enjoyment of a hearty appetite, like a day labourer; and, indeed, with

a disregard of all the delicacies and proprieties of the table, which one would certainly not have expected from a day labourer, seated in company with one whom he regarded as a gentleman.

My *amour propre* was a little piqued to see, gentleman as I considered myself, and as I believe I appeared to others, how little that circumstance was regarded by my friend.

He finished his meal with a loud smack of satisfaction; and then stretching out his thick-soled heavy shoes to the fire, leaned back in his chair, with an expression of the most solid comfort.

I was piqued, as I said, at this extreme self-possession; and with the common vanity of my age, I turned away from him, and began to address the landlord—to mention Holnicote as a place with which I was well acquainted; and to praise the beauty of its grounds and gardens.

"Fine place, Sir, I don't doubt; but, to my mind, no place in the county to be compared to Mount Sorel. Now, were I a gentleman, Sir; that's the place would be for my money. And yet they say, Sir, it'll go for a'most nothing—nobody as comes to look at it. To be sure, Entwistle did let all run to ruin in a strange sort—and that steward of his, Burton, always half drunk, Sir, roaring and tippling—and Entwistle after the hounds all day—and drinking himself dead drunk to bed every night. Bad doings at the Hall, sir!—I'm no saint, I like a cheering glass well enough—but not as a man should make a sot and brute o' himself, as Entwistle, and that beast Burton did."

"You say, it's only two miles from hence," said I.

I was seized with a sudden sort of invincible desire to visit it.

"Can one get to see it?" I asked.

"Oh ay, Sir, by applying at the lodge gate. It's on sale, you know, Sir—and though they say as one must have a ticket, why, they won't refuse you, Sir."

"Well," said my friend, by the fire. "In my opinion, one fine place is just like another.—I would not go a quarter of a mile, out of my way to see the finest of 'em. A big house—and big trees—and grass in a park, where bread for human creatures might be growing: symbols of that despicable and destructive pride, which makes man lord it over his starving fellow-creatures;—starving, that *his* pride may be fed with '*my Park.*' Pshaw!"....

"This is a remarkably beautiful and very singular place," said I, "and if you will go with me to-morrow, I believe I can show you the most beautiful ruin and view in the country—at least, so I have heard."

"Well, I have nothing else to do.—I am rather a lover of fine prospects; though no great admirer of fine houses and aristocratical park palings. When shall you go?"

"I must be away very early," I said, but if he would go, I would be up at six o'clock in the morning, and return to breakfast.

"I am your man, then," said he.

"So be it," was my reply.

I don't know what made me desire his company;

partly that I was piqued to show him the beauty of Mount Sorel; partly that he amused and interested me ;—and I was glad to see a little more of him. His conversation during dinner and the rest of the evening, was remarkably entertaining and agreeable. He was a man who had evidently travelled much, and he took the most original views of things. His principles were of the most levelling description—and I, in my crude philosophy, began to speculate upon the danger to society, when men of abilities so remarkable were driven into obscure conditions, which rendered them restless and discontented with every thing around them—and bent upon overthrowing every privilege, of every description, that could obstruct their own advancement.

He told me little of himself, except that he walked about the world staff in hand, doing little, but observing. That his observations had led him to the conclusion, that the mass of mankind was nothing but one heap of selfishness ; that the luxury and corruption of the higher orders were sapping the very foundations of society; and that nothing, but a complete regeneration, could remedy the innumerable evils under which the human race was labouring. And, in short, he seemed to be much of opinion that peripatetic philosophers, like himself, were the only section left of mankind, from whom either truth, principle, or patriotism were to be expected.

All this was very new to me ; and certainly his eloquence, for very eloquent he undoubtedly was, had its effect upon my mind. He seemed so

ardently devoted to the happiness of his race; so sanguine as to the results of the new and untried experiments in human society, which he advocated.

He painted in colours so mournful, the desolation and degradation into which so many of his fellow-creatures had fallen; execrated in terms so animated, the vices of those he stigmatised as their tyrants; that my young mind was dazzled, my best feelings aroused, and a generous enthusiasm for the glorious cause of universal freedom, peace, and well-being, animated me in a manner totally new. I, whose thoughts had till now been so entirely absorbed in the circle of domestic affections, and the secret passion of my own heart.

I felt roused and ennobled by the glorious theme. I panted for the emancipation he promised; I longed to fling aside, what he called, the ignoble prejudices of education, and to take part in the vast struggle which he announced as rapidly approaching.

I was young, sincere, and ardent. How many of the young, sincere, and ardent, have felt their hearts glow responsive to the mighty theme. Alas! that such generous aspirations, that such righteous and fervent desires, should have been so little guided by that wisdom which is of the *actual*. So little chastened by that prudence which is born of experience. There was a false glitter, a romantic hope, a delusive *ignis fatuus* in these things then, that misled, and deceived, many a better and a wiser man than I was.

I look back upon those tempestuous days with sorrow and with hope. Great things were effected—mighty

evils resisted. For the enthusiasm which effected much, let us be grateful ;—for the steadiness which in this country sets limits to the excesses of that enthusiasm, let us be more thankful still. The mighty of intellect, and the righteous of heart, were to be found ranged on either side of this great argument. Alas! for the storms that rent them asunder.

If I were to detail the conversation of that evening, I might enter upon a subject which it is my determination strictly to avoid. It would be impossible so to express myself, as to escape the imputation of taking one or other side in the great contest then fought ; and, perhaps, even now, not altogether ended. This, I repeat, it is my steady resolution to avoid. The effects of those days of contention, upon private happiness; and the results, in their combination with the characters and scenes in domestic life; form that with which I have alone to do.

I have erred myself like the rest. I have found reason to love and honour men of every side. Many of my own most decided opinions, I have lived to change : to think my own best weighed and most disinterested actions, mistaken. How, then, shall I judge others, who have need myself of so candid, and indulgent a judge?

But where do I wander ? As for me—how many bitter hours have been my portion, dating from that fatal night when I sat, a charmed listener, by my eloquent friend over that little blazing inn fire; while the storm, as if typifying the consequences of that evening's meeting, roared and crackled without; the wind howling; the

rain plashing and beating against the little casement.

It was one of the wildest nights I ever remember. My new friend, and I, laid more and more wood upon the fire. As the fire blazed, as the tempest without raved; so rose the enthusiasm of the unknown. His words became more and more energetic; his sentiments more and more enthusiastic; I listened in a sort of fascination, under the influence of his extraordinary powers.

It was late when we parted—mutually, it would appear, interested in each other.

As we went up the little creaking stairs, to our humble chambers, I again mentioned the plan of visiting Mount Sorel at six o'clock the following morning.

"We shall have an hour or two more of one another's society," said he, "and I am glad to find you are, like myself, an early riser.—The sloth, which confines men to their curtained bedrooms, when the sun is risen, and all nature full of the genial spirit of the day, is as injurious, as it is contemptible..... Another of those forms of effeminacy and luxury, which I have been deprecating, as the destruction of all that is energetic in the character of man. The slave of his bed!—can we want a fitter tool, a more ready prepared subject, for the vile despotism of others? Any thing, the merest pretence of authority, can subdue the feeble Sybarite; who cannot even vanquish his own feather-bed. To-morrow, at six—I am at your service, Sir."

And he entered through the little black door of his apartment, and disappeared.

CHAPTER VI.

The huge old hall, of knightly state,
Dismantled seemed, and desolate.
ROKEBY.

I DID not sleep for some time; the conversation of the evening had excited me too much; I lay tossing about, on my hard pallet—which, in spite of my new friend's Lacedemonian principles, I would fain have exchanged for a good pair of mattrasses; listening at intervals to the storm now subsiding.

Oh, had it but continued to rave! Only a few hours longer.—Had nature but maintained that contest of the elements, one short half day!

But the thunder now faintly rolled in the distance, the wind lulled into whispers, the rain ceased; and I fell, at last, asleep.

My slumber was troubled and uneasy. I was wandering, as I thought, in the woods of Mount Sorel, Clarice was by my side. We talked, as we were wont to do, of all the innocent interests of the day; but, suddenly, we were in a dark, deep, entangled wood; we were struggling with all the painful, futile efforts of a dream, among briars

and thorns;—I was urging her forward, her hand in mine, fighting darkly with the obstructions which surrounded us; when the earth suddenly opened, a horrid gulf yawned beneath my feet ; she screamed—she loosed my hand—she sank into the depths before my eyes—and, as the closing waves of earth wrapped over her, I awoke, my limbs trembling, and in a paroxysm of horror.

The morning was shining peaceful and bright; the early dawn breaking before my little uncurtained window; the storm was all hushed, and had rolled away; leaving that delightful freshness in the air, which follows a summer night like this.

I heard my friend, already walking heavily about his room ; and I flung myself out of my bed ; resolved, not to merit his reproaches on the score of that slothful effeminacy, which he appeared so much to despise.

He was soon knocking at my door ; and seemed much pleased to find me ready.

The morning showed him to still greater advantage, than the evening had done. His peculiarly manly and handsome features, his active and vigorous frame, the bright intelligence, the penetration, the fun, expressed in his eye—now he was refreshed with sleep, and the stain of travel effaced, by a good water and towel,—were still more remarkable and agreeable than before. He seemed to like me too, as much better as I did him, now that he saw me dressed in my own clothes; which, certainly, improved my appearance a good deal.

"Well, my young gentleman," said he, cheerfully, "I'm not sorry to see, that, in spite of your aristocratical *habits*," looking at my well cut coat, and fashionable toilette;

"you can keep your word, and rise with the sun. Well, are you ready? Can you walk before breakfast? Or, must you have something to support nature, forsooth?"

I said, "that I hoped he would not think me very much of a Sybarite; if I begged for a hunch of bread, and a glass of water." He laughed, and shook his head; but, of course, made no objection. On the landlord making the same offer to him, however, he cried, "Pshaw! do you think *I* want six meals a day? Let us have a good substantial breakfast when we come back, that's all."

"And my horse ready, for I must ride immediately afterwards," said I.

Was it not a strange perverseness? was it not as if to hurry me on my fate, that I seemed thus determined to persist, in the indulgence of this idle fancy—of visiting Mount Sorel that morning with the stranger—when, if I had followed Mrs. Fermor's advice, I should immediately have rejoined my father; it being still possible to see him before he set out that morning.

The stranger, himself, seemed, without intending it, to assist me in this straightforward course of performing the simple duty of the day; for, he was very indifferent about visiting this grand place; against which he appeared to entertain a sort of prejudice. It seemed written, that my own inexplicable pertinacity, alone, should be the cause of all that followed.

We set out, then, on this most beautiful and brilliant of mornings. The air was inexpressibly fresh and delightful; the sun tinting the grass and trees, as he darted his pure early rays upon the steaming earth;

the dew drops hanging on herb and flower, as we threaded a deep and beautiful lane, and, at length, found ourselves before the splendidly wrought, but rusted, iron gates which opened upon the domain of Mount Sorel.

The lodge was in a state of the utmost dilapidation; the window-frames fast decaying, broken panes stopped with woollen cloths or paper, the roof wretchedly out of repair, the little garden a wilderness of docks and nettles, and the straggling ivy falling from the walls of the once pretty cottage, in large masses which trailed upon the earth. We were some time before we could make any one hear, for the inhabitants were evidently still in their beds; and while we hallooed at intervals, we stood and admired the fine tracery of the gorgeous iron work, and the beautiful proportion of the magnificent gateway.

Dark majestic woods towered on each side, spreading as far as the eye could reach, and the trees that surrounded us were of the noblest growth and proportions. My friend seemed to forget his contempt of worldly distinctions, in admiration of this grave and time-honoured magnificence before him.

At last, an answer was made to our repeated summons; an old woman came grumbling out of the lodge, with gray hair, dirty cap, and a ragged blue and white bedgown and petticoat, her figure half-doubled and leaning upon her staff. She moved heavily, and, opening a little side wicket, we were admitted.

What a scene! The woods and banks—the shining expanse of water—the splendid mansion of Sir Ralphe,

with the beautiful green wide-spreading lawn before it sweeping to the lake — the red precipitous rocks beyond—the gray ruins!—all, gleaming in the full splendour of the bright morning sun, and glittering with the dew, burst at once upon our eyes.—It was the most glorious, the most magnificent, scene I had ever beheld! My companion was struck dumb, as well as I. The gay sarcasm of his conversation ceased; he became meditative and silent.

It was a scene never to be forgotten, so wildly beautiful did it look that day; deserted and silent as it stood, —the numerous herds of deer alone, peopling that wide solitude. It seemed to me to be calling for its ancient owners,—to be standing there in mute expectation of him, its far-descended master, so soon to reassume, in that possession, his long lost place and dignity.

With what a mixture of reverence, awe, and pleasure, did I tread those gleaming lawns—and wide, neglected ways!

All the innumerable windows of the front were closed; but the sun was glittering upon them; and this peaked and picturesque mansion had an air of a rich romantic magnificence, that, to my imagination, far excelled the regularity, and symmetry, of a more classical edifice.

So thought the stranger too.

"This is grand!" said he, "this is historically grand! This speaks of old English days of simplicity and genial hospitality.—No slip-slop imitation of classical models here. Saxon-English to the very bone..... I never thought this Mount Sorel, which you, and

mine host made such a fuss about, was a place so noble as this.—This is fine, Sir."

We passed the house, and ascended the hill to the ruins. We, too, gazed upon these time-honoured monuments of departed things,—and stooped to spell out the half-defaced inscriptions on those tombs, over which the high tufted grass and flaunting ivy were growing.

We gazed through that exquisite specimen of Gothic tracery, that beautiful western window, upon the loveliest mingled scene of woods and waters and blue distance, that ever visited my eyes.

We then scrambled among the rocks. I was lost in delight, and said nothing. My companion was equally absorbed in thought. Now and then he stooped down, picked up a few stones, examined them, and threw them carelessly away ;—one or two pieces, however, he put into his pocket.

He proposed as we returned, that we should visit the courts and offices ; this somewhat annoyed me, for I began now to be impatient to return to the inn. I looked at my watch—it was eight o'clock ; I said I feared I should be late; and that of all things, stables and offices were the least interesting to me.

It was not so with him, he said ;—he liked to see how these things were managed in olden times, but he begged he might not detain me.

However, I would not leave him after his civility in undertaking the walk for the pleasure of my company ; so we ascended to the house together, and tried to make our way to the stables.

These were very large and handsome,—the deep-toned clock over the great gates struck eight as we rang at the bell. I was impatient to be gone; not so my companion; he was examining every thing about him with increased interest and curiosity.

After we had waited some time, old goodman Grey appeared at the gate. He was a fresh-coloured, gray-headed old man, his face covered with wrinkles, and the frosty colour of a healthy old age—like that of a withered apple—upon his cheek.

He had the appearance of an old huntsman or groom; and in some capacity about the stables, I suppose he had served, for he seemed quite at home here. He led us round these beautifully appointed stables, which were in a better state of repair, than any thing else that we saw. This part of his establishment had not been neglected by the late master; and there had scarcely been time since his death, for neglect and inattention to do their usual work of destruction; all here having been, till of late, preserved in such nice order.

We visited the dog-kennels; their baying inhabitants, now, all departed; the most mournful silence prevailing.

"Ay, Sir," said the old man, mournfully. "Things were different awhile ago, when master in his pink and leathers and boots,—the prettiest man upon a horse you ever saw, Sir,—used to come through that door, Sir, to mount his hack and ride to cover. This court-yard, so lonesome now, Sir, would be full of gay young gentlemen then, all hallooing and laughing, and mounting their hacks—while the hunters were being led about up

and down here, Sir, by the grooms. Ay, Sir, capital hunters had Squire Entwistle ; — the bravest rider of the country side. But it's lonesome work now, all like as a house of the dead, as one may say. A pity, Sir, so fine a young man!—Drink—it was the drink was the death of him."

"What!" said the stranger, "he was a tippler, was he?"

"Never went to bed sober for many a long day. Couldn't help it, Sir.—Bred to it from a boy. Th' ould squire 'd make little one toss off his glass of port, with 'Confusion to the king's enemies,' afore the little fellow was a five year old. It's a bad custom, Sir.... Been a fine young man, and a brave young man—but it's all over now."

"What a brute!" cried my friend, indignantly. "Chasing a helpless creature to death!—hallooing on a pack of wild beasts after the poor helpless thing. Riding a brave and noble animal till his swelling veins are ready to burst,—and finishing a day so well begun, by swilling like a swine, and being carried drunk to bed. A noble recreation for a rational being... 'In action like an angel,—in apprehension like a god'!"

"Ay, Sir, but hunting be a royal sport, howsomever," said the old man, "and so you'd ha said, had you been ever in at a death — that a would. I've seen 'em on a fine spring morning come sweeping at full cry, out of the Danna wood, and over the farther park—right away beyond there,—hounds in full cry, man and horse at the top of their speed. Oh! it's a sight for a king, Sir!"

"*Quite*," said my friend.

"And the hunter's horn echoing—and—and—"

"Come, come," said the stranger, somewhat impatiently, "have you nothing more to show us?"

"That's the way to the garden, Sir, but I haven't the key;—this is the Tennis Court—and here is the bowling-green," leading to a beautiful bowling-green, surrounded by a thick, well-trimmed yew hedge, and shaded on one side by a row of magnificent lime trees now in full flower.

"Now this is what I like," said the stranger, walking in and seating himself upon one of the benches. "This is what I call sound, manly, wholesome exercise. A bowling-green is what one seldom sees now-a-days. We are grown too fine for such simple sports. I like this, Sir. I like this place upon the whole very much," said he, giving the old man some money; and turning to me, "I really thank you, my young friend, for making me come here. It is a very noble estate. I never thought I should meet with a thing of this sort so entirely to my taste. There is no flimsy gew-gaw pretence and nonsense about this; all is pure, solid old English taste. I like it, Sir!"

We now returned by a walk that led us through another part of the woods. Here was a noble growth of timber; the oaks, elms, and chesnuts, spreading wide their majestic arms, in all the grandeur of the primeval forest. The white trunks and bare arms of several aged and decaying trees, forming the most beautiful groups and pictures, and every now and then affording natural openings for the blue sky. The

gigantic ivy towered over the ruins of many a noble tree, perishing under the lapse of centuries. Nothing could be more wildly beautiful, but nothing could present a more complete picture of reckless neglect, than did these woods; abandoned, as it would seem, for generations, to the injuries of time, and the waste of accident.

"This is wild—and it is romantic and beautiful, no doubt," remarked my companion; "and were it, in truth, a primeval forest, would gratify one's taste for the untracked solitudes of nature; but there is something in waste and disorder such as this, near the habitations of man, which disgusts and displeases me. I cannot bear to look upon that which might have been converted to purposes of utility; to the advancement of improvement and happiness, through the resources of commerce;—to see all these fine materials of enjoyment lavished by the hand of Nature, thus perishing through the vicious negligence and selfish indolence of their possessor. It is vexatious—it is irritating to think, into what hands these noble possessions have fallen, and may fall."

Had I dared, I could have satisfied him as to this last particular. I could have told him that the hands into which they were about to fall, were not those either of selfish indolence or vicious negligence.

But my respect for Mr. de Vere's wishes, kept me silent. We quitted the domain by a path which led through a gate into the high road. The gate was half broken, and stood partly open; while in the paling near, various defalcations showed that the people in

the neighbourhood had been for some time in the habit of making a sort of wood-yard, not only of the wood, by picking the broken branches, but of the trees themselves.

Several rough, year-old cattle, and various ragged horses, were trampling about; regaling themselves upon the tops of the green springing underwood of ash and hazel.

"Here again," repeated he, "see the mischiefs arising from the luxurious indolence of pampered excess! What do I see?" looking round,—"What do I see?.... In place of honest industry well paid, and well employed, to collect and to store, for the warming and comforting of wretched creatures,—the very gifts of nature cursed, as the temptation to pilfering, thieving, and all species of irregular gains. Sir, this wood is rearing immortal man for the gallows; where I'll be bound this reckless master of thousands of acres, would have been just as ready to send him, as if his means had been converted, as they ought to have been, into the sources of human welfare, instead of into a nursery for crime. The drunken, execrable, wealth-swollen sot!"

He spoke with an acrimony in his tone that was new to me; and after we had gained the high road, fell into so profound a meditation, that he seemed scarcely to notice my presence.

We reached our inn, where we found a homely and plentiful breakfast, ready spread, upon the round table of our little parlour.

My friend sat down; but paid a very different attention to the viands from what he had done at the supper

of the preceding night. He seemed lost in thought, and scarcely tasted a morsel.

When the host came in, he asked at what time the first coach would pass for London, where he had business; and being informed that one was to come up in about ten minutes, he hastily collected his things; threw his great coat over his arm, stretched out his hand to me, shook mine cordially, and saying he hoped it would not be long before we should meet again, and that he would walk on to meet the coach, took up his staff, and desiring the landlord to follow and show him the way, departed.

When he was gone, I ordered my horse immediately to the door; and while I waited for him, asked my host, who was now returned, whether he knew any thing of the gentleman who had just left us.

"Why, as for gentleman," was his answer, "I don't much count them as gentlemen, who come walking in in their dusty shoes, or dripping like drowned rats on a rainy day. I suppose he is some strolling player, or verse-making gentleman, or so.—I never thinks much of walking gentlemen, not I.... though this one pays handsome for what he gets, which is more nor all of them does—however, I never saw him afore."

CHAPTER VII.

You knew—who knew not? Astrophel.
Of him—all find the merit such,
I cannot say—you hear—too much.

I FOUND my father expecting me with impatience; a very old friend of his, knowing his desire that I should finish my education by making the tour of the continent, had written to inform him that a gentleman of whom he had a very high opinion, was upon the point of setting out, in company, or rather in charge of, a very fine and promising young man, of about my own age.

The gentleman, who had accepted the office of travelling tutor, was in circumstances of very singular pecuniary embarrassment; and it had struck his friend, that if it could be arranged that the party should consist of two pupils instead of one, the advantages resulting to the travelling tutor would be so far increased, as to perhaps enable him to overcome his present difficulties.

He did not mention the name of the young gentleman who was to be my companion; but assured my father that he was a young man of the highest promise.

My father—I have not described, and I feel tempted to do it now. He does not take any very prominent part in the events of this history; and yet I would fain attempt his portrait, were it merely for the sake of its extreme beauty.

To begin then, my father was a perfect gentleman;—I mention this first, because it was the first impression every one received on meeting him. It was not as a very remarkable man, in any other respect, that one at first conceived of him: his qualities were in such just harmony, that no one, individually, claimed either that attention or admiration, which is excited by characters more vehement. But those who came to know him well, discerned how various and valuable are the qualities of which the character of a perfect gentleman is composed. How much self-command—how much self-discipline—how much habitual consideration of the wants, wishes, and opinions of others—what calm and sound views of men, and of society—what well-balanced feelings—what well-regulated passions—must combine, to constitute the perfection of that *rôle*.

My father possessed a clear, penetrating understanding, and sound, excellent, good sense; his mind was not excursive, for his imagination was not powerful; neither had he the attributes of genius; he did not *divine*, but he *saw*. I think I never met with man, gifted with so clear a mental eye.

It was his, to penetrate the vain pretences, the idle subterfuges, under which man hides his true motives and impulses, not only from others, but from himself. He could detect under the outward garb of disinter-

estedness, the pride, the vanity, the selfishness, and the base covetousness, which too often lurked beneath.

The mask of religious zeal and austerity hid not from him the bigotry and the ambition which it covered. He saw the fanatic of a party, disguised under the garb of political martyrdom; and discerned the mean ambition of mere personal advancement, under the harangues of the pretended patriot. He could distinguish between the honest dupe, and the leader of dupes; and trace the dubious course of him, who worked the enthusiasm of others for his own advantage.

He saw so justly, and so clearly, that, like the unhappy prophetess of Troy, he, too often, saw in vain. Not so much that he was before his age—like many whose wisdom has been unavailing, because it has come too soon—as that his eye was more piercing than that of others, and few could see what he so distinctly discerned. He was therefore, in general, a silent observer, keeping his opinions much to himself.—I must add, that he possessed a most gentle and polished wit, which flashing, from time to time, played round rather than struck its object.

With a judgment so just, and so discerning, you will perhaps fancy that my father was a severe, and ill-natured man. Quite the reverse; he was the most indulgent and candid judge that I ever remember to have met with. His temper was, indeed, naturally so agreeable and sweet, that any thing acrimonious or harsh was foreign to his very nature. And besides, he saw too justly not to discover the excellences, as well as the imperfections of poor human nature: he would smile at

the self-delusion which leads a man to believe that he is impelled by the purest sense of right, when his motives are in fact merely self-interested. He could smile at all his mistakes and delusions with a sort of affectionate pity; and could sympathise with the strong impulses of passions, by which his own heart was untainted. Never was misanthrope so kind,—never was cynic so amiable.

Every one loved him, every one trusted him, every one honoured him; but very few had an extraordinary opinion of his abilities, so that the influence he exercised was small; even I, much as I loved and respected him, was somewhat in the habit of undervaluing his judgment, and trusting rather to my own more vigorous understanding,—as I thought it.

More particularly in the estimate of character. That annihilation of all personal idolatry which was the result of my father's temperate habit of thought, was insupportable to a temper so enthusiastic as mine. I was not, because I would not suffer myself to be, guided by that clear perception which discerned blemishes, when I was dazzled with glories.

With his usual caution, he now hesitated upon the proposal of his friend. He disliked the idea of entrusting one, so raw and unpractised as he knew me to be, to the influences that must inevitably spring from connexion of this sort, with a youth of my own age.

He agreed, however, not to abandon without further inquiry, a plan which appeared to me fraught with enjoyment. The idea of parting with Clarice was the only drawback to the pleasure I anticipated. But I

hoped to improve myself, and to shake off that sort of diffidence, that want of harmony with myself,—those perplexing feelings of self-distrust, united to self-confidence,—of self-estimation, and of self-abasement, of vanity, and of humility, which disturbed and annoyed me. For I felt convinced that nothing ever could or would remedy these defects, but circulation in the great world, and the practice of men. He said he would write to his friend, and be minute in his inquiries.

"At least, let us begin by learning the name of this young gentleman. It is strange how invariably Clarkson forgets to inquire, or to announce a name in matters of this kind. He looks only at *things*, with which he fancies *names* have nothing to do; and embarrasses business, by what he imagines to be his direct and clear-sighted way, of dropping all but the leading points of it."

We then talked of Mr. de Vere, and I told him that the proposition for a purchase was to be made on the ensuing Monday.

He heard this with satisfaction.

"I am glad to hear that there is to be no more delay about the matter," he said. "Mr. Lawson may be an excellent solicitor, and so I dare say he is, but the law is a bad school. He has got into a habit of taking advantages which I dislike. When an estate is to be purchased; there is something unpleasant to me, in the idea of lying by, waiting for the depreciation of the market—that a property may diminish in value by the effects of a year's delay and dilapidation. It is a false and ungenerous calculation; for the injuries done,

his principal will have to repair. Lawson is thinking too much of the credit he, the solicitor, shall obtain by making an excellent bargain. It is well he has not found the price, which I am persuaded is far below the real value, raised upon him."

Of Mr. de Vere's anxiety to obtain this property, he remarked,

"I cannot help in great measure, sympathising with him.—I think, if I were in his place, I should feel the same. I have lived, perhaps, too much in the world, to understand the full force of this absorption of thought —this passion, with which the soul seizes upon one idea.—It seems difficult in these enlightened days, to comprehend that depth of melancholy interest with which some few, yet left in England, regard their ancient, long-descended families; and mourn over their slow and insensible decay.

"There is an appearance of generosity," he continued, "a reverence for the past, and for the fallen, which encourages a man of the high temper of Mr. de Vere, in this sort of devotion to one object; magnifying it, in his eyes, into one of the most exalted duties of our nature—that, to the declining and the forsaken. He is devoted to a high and chivalric idea—which he sees trampled under foot by the eager herd rushing forward in pursuit of the material and baser enjoyments of life . . . Had it been necessary, he would have impoverished himself and family for generations, to have restored Mount Sorel to the house of de Vere. One is glad that he makes a capital bargain, at the

same time,—a thing, though he does not suspect it, which Mr. de Vere likes as well as any one of us."

"Well Edmund," he added, "amid this chopping and changing—though Mr. Lawson has taken care that *you* shall pay a handsome price for Ash Grove,—if I am not deceived, your grandson will think you have made an excellent affair of it too."

This was Wednesday.—On Monday, Mr. Lawson was to make his offer:—the news of its acceptance could not reach Holnicote till the following evening. Mr. de Vere had asked me to return and pass the Sunday with him and his family, and I had promised so to do.

On Saturday evening, therefore, I took leave of my father, and returned on horseback to Holnicote.

My father shook his head when I mentioned my intention. "Take care of yourself, Edmund," said he. "Clarice is fast ripening into a very lovely young woman. Don't forget that she is no longer a little girl,—that she will soon be the Heiress of Mount Sorel,—and that you are a romantic and somewhat foolish young man. When you have made the grand tour, you may be trusted with the charge of any heart that may then remain upon your hands. For the present it is honest—it is enthusiastic—and I, at least, think it very well worth taking care of."

"I thank you, Sir, for thinking it worth the caution. I will do my best to take care of it," said I, trying to laugh, but deeply mortified at his speech, however qualified.

"Edmund," said he, kindly and gravely, perceiving this, "I spoke lightly,—for it is usually the best manner of treating these sort of matters,—but I feel this seriously. I feel anxious with regard to your happiness. There are very few young men whose hearts, in my opinion, are worth a thought; but I know the strength and the sincerity of yours. We may forget,—but depend upon it, Mr. de Vere will not long forget,—that his daughter has ceased to be a child. Accept my warning—it may be by and by too late.

Too late! Alas! it was already too late. I loved her with a passion that had invaded every pulse of my being —I had not a hope, a thought, a purpose, that was not for her!

But I was not discouraged by my father's observations. I thought I knew them all, better than he did. A thousand circumstances, too trifling to be enumerated, but whose united evidence was conclusive, had proved to me that I was a great favourite with both the parents. The satisfaction with which Mrs. de Vere had seen me the purchaser of her father's estate; the confidence with which Mr. de Vere had treated me; and, above all, the sweet affection with which my beloved Clarice invariably received me; made me believe, with the fond security of youth, that for me, the waters were to reascend to their sources—the course of nature to be interrupted—and the most ambitious and haughty man of my acquaintance, become reasonable, simple, and temperate in his objects and desires.

They were at tea when I arrived; and the general satisfaction which appeared in every countenance as I

entered the little blue drawing-room, might have assured any one that I was, to all, a most welcome guest. They were sitting with the front window open to the ground, and the smell of the flowers was sweet; and the whispers of the breeze among the shrubs, in this soft evening, alone to be heard. Mrs. de Vere was knotting, Mr. de Vere reading, Mrs. Fermor knitting; and poor Clarice, looking rather *ennuyée*, and *désœuvrée*, was sipping her tea, and playing with her tea-spoon.

They seemed to be all rather dull, when my entrance aroused every one. Mr. de Vere threw aside his book, and rose with great cordiality to meet and shake hands with me; Mrs. de Vere and Mrs. Fermor gave me a very pleasant and friendly greeting; and Clarice was all smiles and gaiety.

She called me to her; seemed to expect that I should take the chair by her side; and was soon prattling, with her still childish vivacity, about this summer-house, which occupied her so much.

Poor Clarice—she was fast arriving at that period of life, when childish pleasures, please no more; when the paradise of infant happiness—the fairy realms of fancy, filled with those airy joys and glories to which all the wealth and grandeur of the earth is as nothing—was beginning to close its gates behind her, and to force her forward into youth.

To youth with all its fervid hopes—its ideal aspirations!—an ideal, which reality alone can now satisfy. —The bright creative fancy of the child, which *made* what it imagined, exchanged for wishes as imaginative, but which the actual alone can now fulfil. With her,

by faint symptoms, was first beginning to make itself felt, that dreadful scourge of *ennui*, which is the bane of youth: that fatal bane to happiness, arising from the void of faculties wasted and unemployed. Imprisoned, as she was, though in this pleasant prison; shut out from joyous healthy associations, with others of her own age; confined to the society of two very quiet elderly women, whom she tenderly loved, but for whom she had nothing to do; already was that fatal disease, that living death, precursor too often of actual disease and real death, beginning to make itself felt. Already did Clarice begin to experience that desire to live, that longing for excitement; which makes pain, effort, vexation, disappointment, agony, tears—any thing—better than repose.

Repose!—the life of old age—the death of youth!

No wonder, then, that she was glad to see me—no wonder that she hailed my approach with a pleasure, which I fondly hoped might ripen to a tenderer sentiment.

The next day, when we returned from afternoon church, Mr. de Vere asked me, as the evening was beautiful, to walk with him.

He opened the iron gate, and, for the first time, led the way through the woods. We came to the lonely stile and rustic bridge; he crossed it, and signed to me to follow.

"Edmund," he said, "so near the moment of fruition, I cannot refuse myself the pleasure this evening of walking through these grounds with you; and sharing toge-

ther, the satisfaction I receive in visiting this beautiful spot."

He took me by a narrow path, which led to the ruins. I had not found an opportunity of mentioning to him, my former visit; indeed, I did not feel quite sure that he would like it. And he now entered so little into conversation—being quite absorbed in his own thoughts—that I forbore speaking upon the subject. It could not possibly matter, I thought.

He took me to the chapel, now illuminated by the evening sun; and he sat down upon one of the tombs, looking round with reverence and awe.

"Edmund," he said, "I cannot tell you what I feel here, with all these crumbling monuments around me. When I look upon these sacred relics of the past,—of those whose blood circulates in my veins; of the great, the magnificent, the renowned, whose ashes here are resting; and reflect, that in twenty-four hours—in less than that time—all will be restored to me.... all that my father's heart, and his father's heart, had in secret bled for, and mourned over as desecrated by the unhallowed foot of the stranger—that this will be restored, and thus restored—deserted—as if no human foot had dared to trample upon the holy dead!"—He paused, and then, "How beautiful! how tranquil is all this!" he said, as we stood gazing over the scene which lay beneath our feet. "A man had need do well, Edmund, that receives as his portion upon earth, so wide, so rich an inheritance."

And the desire and the determination to do well; to

dispense, as a man of rectitude and high feeling ought, the power he was about to receive; and to restore, not only the splendours, but the best honours of his long-descended line, by a life of noble activity and virtue; was swelling, I am certain, at that moment within his breast.

How I linger!—how I delay!—and pause and hesitate—as I approach the catastrophe of this high-minded man's fortunes!

I would fain excite your sympathy for one, for whom, in spite of all his errors, I felt so deeply. But perhaps this is an impossibility, the intensity of passion with which he dwelt upon this one object, belonged rather to the individual, than to human nature in general. I, who have witnessed, can feel for it; but it may not be so with you.

We walked quietly home through the darkening shades.

The next day; great as was Mr. de Vere's self-command, and accustomed as he was, in every event of life, to preserve that air of dignified composure, which rendered his manner so imposing; it was impossible for him to preserve his equanimity. He abstained from the slightest expression of his feelings by words; but his restlessness was only the more uncontrolable. It seemed as if it were impossible for him to sit still, or to remain in his own room. He came into the ladies' morning room, and sat down by Clarice who was sitting at work; then he rose, and went to the window, which commanded a view of the opposite hill; and stood gazing some time; then he looked at his watch. The stable clock struck two. It was

the hour, the moment,—the treaty must be at that instant in consideration. Oh, strange imprisonment of the human spirit! which chains it to one vacant spot, when interests, so vital to its very existence, are being carried on elsewhere.

As the clock struck two, such thoughts passed rapidly through my mind. I suppose they occupied his—he suddenly, as I said, looked at his watch, and then, hastily quitting the room, I saw him traverse the terrace, and bury himself in the wood.

And there—was his haughty spirit humbled by the very excess of its felicity—there—was it bent to thanksgiving and prayer?—No one can ever know.—

The day but one after, is to me as a dream; of which, on being suddenly awakened, some faint confused impression remains. We remember that we did dream something, that is all.

It is all obscure confusion to me still.

At eight o'clock in the evening, the post came in. The London letters then arrived—we should hear from Mr. Lawson.

The servant comes in—the letter bag is in Mr. de Vere's hand—I saw it tremble slightly as he endeavoured to turn the key.

"Let me, papa," said Clarice, starting up from her chair and glancing uneasily at me.

He looked very pale.

He gave her the bag—she opened it—there *was* a letter.

"It is from Lawson," said he, and turning to the window, proceeded to open and read it He opened it

—read it without moving a muscle—folded it, and said, "Lawson was too late—the estate is gone!"—

I could not understand him. I started up, while Clarice, with a faint cry of "Oh! poor papa," sprang to his side.

He was perfectly silent. He seemed struggling to bear this bitter—this almost insupportable disappointment, with dignity.

He succeeded. One syllable of vain regret—one expression of vexation at the useless delays which had occasioned it—never from that moment to this, passed his lips. The courage with which he supported himself in this supreme moment, redeemed all the errors of his character.

Mrs. de Vere rose—she came timidly forward as one uncertain whether her consolation may be offered, or how it will be received. He seemed to deprecate consolation, but he took her hand as she advanced, and said, "Sophia, I shall never forget your kind concession to my wishes in this business," and without a word more, he left the room. Then her tears flowed.

But my blood was curdling with horror as I read the letter. As twice I read it, before my dazzled eyes and swimming brain could take in the whole of its meaning. Could it be so?—was I, in my inexplicable folly, the cause—the hateful cause of an event so disastrous to them all?

It was too true. Mr. Lawson's letter was a pitiable performance; a lamentable and laboured attempt to deprecate the blame, and hide the mortification he had

heaped upon himself, by the mismanagement of an affair of this importance.

He exclaimed upon the impossibility of any human being having anticipated the singular event which had taken place. He recapitulated the reasons he had for believing himself secure of the purchase, whenever he pleased to make his offer. He repeated that not an inquiry had been made of any description, till late on Saturday evening, when Mr. Biggs had already left the office. A gentleman had entered the room about six o'clock in the evening, and had made an offer to Mr. Tennison so far exceeding his expectations, that that gentleman did not feel himself justified in hesitation; especially as the purchaser demanded a categorical answer, declaring that he had no time to lose,—that such was the sum he intended to offer, more he should not be induced to give. That he hated delay and uncertainty, and that he must have his answer, yes or no; as he was leaving town for Paris the next morning. It was impossible for Mr. Tennison, the senior partner in the house, to take upon himself the refusal of a sum larger, by some thousands, than the one he had been instructed to accept. He closed with the offer, without even apprising Mr. Lawson.

I have since heard it surmised, that he had been a good deal piqued and offended by what he thought Mr. Lawson's unhandsome tactics upon the occasion; and that he was not sorry to give that gentleman a lesson,—but not a hint of this in the letter.

The purchaser, the letter added, must be a strange sort of being; for he admitted that he had never, even,

heard of the estate till three days before, when he visited it with a young gentleman into whose company he had *accidentally fallen;* and was so much pleased with it as to decide upon becoming the proprietor. "This seems so strange a story," added Mr. Lawson, "that there are hopes my gentleman will not be ready to come down with the money, and the deposit may be forfeited. In the meantime, he has left instructions with Messrs. Tennison and Biggs to arrange the purchase, and show the titles to Messrs. Worthington and Jones, his solicitors, in Furnivals Inn; very respectable men, I understand."

A P S. added the information that the gentleman's name was Higgins.

Of this long letter, I do not believe that Mr. de Vere ever read more than the first half-dozen sentences. As for me, I read it, my blood freezing in my veins. I looked upon myself with a sort of horror, with a feeling of bitter contempt and vexation, which defies description. All would have been well, could but I, busy, meddling fool that I was, have been content to do, what I knew was Mr. de Vere's wish, forbear visiting the domain till the purchase was finally completed.

And here must I pick up an utter stranger on my road, be captivated with his conversation, and amused with his whims; and actually drag him—persuade him to a visit which had terminated in such disastrous consequences.

Of all the painful irritating feelings that human life affords, this self-reproach for one of those awkward, untoward, blunders in life, is the most mortifying and insup-

portable. There is something noble in remorse, there is something tender in repentance: but this is a subject for neither remorse nor repentance. The action is in itself innocent. Blame cannot attach to what has been the effect of a union of circumstances, so utterly out of the power of the wisest to have anticipated. But to be, oneself, the unfortunate connecting link which just bound all these fortuitous circumstances together, and rendered them fatal! And this, for nothing! for the gratification of the most trifling wish! of the least urgent of desires—of a mere fancy—a whim!

How I cursed the tempest that had driven us to shelter—the morning sun that had illuminated our walk. My very interest about Mount Sorel—all had been fatal! Why must I introduce the subject?..... Then, the intolerable stranger—how I detested the very idea of the man, with whom I had been fascinated to such an inconceivable degree!

The rapidly increasing darkness hid my emotions from the two ladies. Mrs. de Vere had given her hand to Mrs. Fermor, who did not weep, but looked distressed and unhappy. My Clarice was engaged with her mother, on whose knee she had sunk; and with her arms round her neck, was whispering every consolation, and lavishing every caress, that her tender, loving heart could suggest. Emulous of the self-command exercised by her father, she endeavoured to maintain her composure, and presently returned to the occupation which the arrival of the post-bag had interrupted; but her tears were flowing fast over her fingers, as she bent her head to her work.

"My sweet Clarice," said I, bending over her tenderly, "if this has been a disappointment to you—"

"To me!" interrupted she, "I am not thinking of myself, but my papa—my poor papa—my noble-minded papa—how he had set his heart upon it." And her tears flowed faster and faster.

There was no consolation to be offered: and my heart, my conscious heart, forbade *me* to attempt it, if there had.

It was one of those misfortunes against which there is no appeal, and for which there is neither remedy nor alleviation. It was *done*.

Presently she rose—again kissed her mother, wiped her eyes, and slipped out of the room.

Her heart was with her father, and she felt an irresistible desire to follow him, and endeavour, in some way, to express her sympathy in his feelings.

"She is gone to him, dear madam," said Mrs. Fermor, "his daughter's tenderness will be the best consolation. Who can resist Clarice?"

"Ah! who can resist her?" thought I, as, perfectly overcome, I had retired to a distant sofa. "Who, but must find consolation in tenderness like hers?"

She went, as I found afterwards, to his room—hesitated—listened.

All was profoundly still. A new fear crept over her, that her father had been overpowered by the strength of those sensations, which he had resisted with so much courage. Was he ill?

Her hand was upon the lock; she ventured gently to open the door. Her father's back was turned towards her. He was standing before the iron closet; he had a

large roll, and some folded papers in his hand; he was slowly and deliberately replacing them in a drawer, which he appeared to arrange with care; he closed the door; the iron leaves of the cupboard fell together, the heavy iron key grated in the lock, the spring closed over it; and he turned away.

He appeared perfectly composed: he was master of himself even in this supreme moment, when he was finally consigning, as it were, to the tomb, those relics and remembrances; those hopes and aspirations; so dear. He was master of himself, even when alone.

He felt there was something degrading in the confession, even to his own secret heart, of the excessive pain which he endured. Something almost childish, in those vain castles in the air which he had been erecting upon so frail a foundation, and whose destruction was as the devastation of all his happiness. His pride sustained him astonishingly under this severe trial—but alas! pride may harden, but it will not console.

There was that in Clarice which responded to all that was magnanimous. At the moment she felt that she adored, rather than loved her father: she crept into the room, laid her hand timidly upon his coat sleeve, and looked up in his face. He was touched by the expression of her countenance, but he would not yield.

"Thank you, my love," he said, in a voice more softened than usual, "but I am busy just now."

He seemed afraid to trust himself with her.

"Go to your mother again—you are a good child, Clarice—God bless you—but don't come here any more. I would rather be alone just now. I am busy."

He would not confess his weakness even to her. His pride refused to accept the consolations offered to infirmity.

Mr. de Vere's resolution—the steadiness with which he refused to indulge in the slightest complaint, the manly composure with which he bore himself, excited my admiration: yet I felt, and I am sure, his wife and daughter felt, how greatly they would have preferred the most weak and wearisome lamentations, to this stoical and haughty coldness. The distance that already separated this dignified and reserved man, and the rest of his family, seemed increased by a disappointment in which they sympathised so sincerely.

Clarice retreated, saddened and disappointed.

Soon after this, we saw him go out. He went into the wood as usual.

At supper-time he appeared among us again; sat down in his place, spoke of general matters, with his usual calm dignity; perhaps, conversed a little more than common; and, from that moment to this, never alluded by one syllable to the subject.

My sweet Clarice! Wretched as I was, my eye followed her; and her figure crosses the dark recollection of that evening, like a pure, bright, angel spirit; fleeting, as it were, across lowering stormy clouds.

Her lovely face was agitated by sorrow and pity; and that sort of sad surprise, with which the young creature, still half a child, first witnesses the pains and sufferings of actual human life. Her eye gazing alternately at each of her parents with a tender perplexity, she seemed scarcely to comprehend their distress.

For to her bright cheerful spirit, any great suffering arising from causes with which the affections had nothing to do, was almost inexplicable. It is long before youth comprehends, by sad experience, how intimately the more sordid cares of existence are linked and interwoven with the softer ties of life. In this instance, however, the associations which bound her father to this coveted possession were better understood; they had to do with the imagination and the affections.

But to see any one suffer, whether she could justly appreciate the cause or not, was sufficient for my good and kind Clarice; for never did kinder heart beat in a more beautiful bosom. Even her poor devoted Edmund sunk annihilated, as he sat, somewhat retreating from the supper-table; and absorbed in his own intolerable sensations, was not overlooked by her. Her sweet eyes, in general so full of life and gaiety, now anxious and sorrowful, turned to me, and seemed to ask of mine, "Why this excess of depression, when, after all, we are every one of us alive, for each other?" Sweet child!—Soft, tender being! contrasted with her cold father, whose calmness and composure might almost be called stern, so resolutely did it appear to reject consolation, and resist every expression of sympathy.

It was her custom every night, when she went to bed, to press her lips upon her father's forehead. A kiss of affection this could hardly be called; it was rather the ceremonial offering of piety and respect.

But this evening, in spite of what had already passed between them, she, with a gesture of love, tenderness, and reverence, not to be expressed, raised his hand to

her lips, and kissed it twice; and the large drops with which her eyes were swimming, fell upon it as she bent down. Whether he feared that this might unman him; whether he felt his stern resolution giving way, I know not; but he shook them off, almost impatiently; yet there was a sublime tenderness in his usually unmoved countenance, as bending down his lofty head, he took his sweet child in his arms, and kissed her fondly.

Not a word was spoken by either party.

Nor did he say any thing more after they were gone; but taking his candle, with a "Good night, Edmund," left the room.

I followed soon after, and ascended the stairs with a slow, melancholy step. I was quite done for; crushed beneath the weight of my own self-reproaches and self-contempt.... that violent irritation of the spirit, which, directed against another, relieves itself by invectives; but which, turned inward, seems almost to kill the poor creature thus at war with, himself.

But I was not deserted in this painful moment. She, my darling! my love! my adored one! she stood waiting in the little ante-chamber, at the top of the stairs, and Mrs. Fermor was with her.

"Dearest Edmund," said she, taking my hand with the fond familiarity of a sister, "how kind and affectionate you are! But don't look so wretchedly unhappy, pray don't, dear, dear Edmund."

"My dear Mr. Edmund," said Mrs. Fermor, "your sympathy for those you love is too deep, it overpowers, it overwhelms you; this is a painful affair; but I should

hope the sources of happiness lie too deep in this family to be long disturbed by such an event."

"Ah, Clarice! ah, madam!" was all I could say, as my tears at last broke forth, and flowed over her hands, as I kissed them rapturously. "Ah, my Clarice! if you knew how dreadful, how horrible all this is to me.... you would detest and abhor me for ever."

"Dear Edmund," was all she kept repeating, "be composed, dearest Edmund, or you will make me cry too."

"Indeed, my love," said Mrs. Fermor, who seemed to think it time to interrupt this little scene, "I think we do Mr. Edmund more harm than good; in truth, all our spirits have been so shook and harrowed to-night, that the sooner we endeavour to compose them by rest and silence the better. Bid Mr. Edmund good night, and come to your room."

"Good night—good night, dear, kind, kind Edmund, then, and get some sleep; you will be better in the morning. Dear, dear, kindest Edmund—good night."

Once more I kissed her hand, and then feeling as if the softest balm had been poured over my wounded spirits, I retreated to my chamber.

CHAPTER VIII.

Oh! how much more doth Beauty beauteous seem,
By that bright ornament which truth doth give.
SHAKSPEARE.

ONCE shut up in my room, and restored to my own solitary reflections, the most intolerable of the ideas which pursued me, was that of receiving all this tender gratitude as the recompense of excessive and generous sympathy, when I was writhing under these horrid feelings of self-accusation and regret.—I, the cause of this heavy disappointment.

I could not endure it: my mind was naturally truthful in the extreme, any thing approaching to concealment was foreign to my nature, and from this sort of disingenuous falsehood it shrank with abhorrence.

That desire for confession, which seems a part of our nature; that instinct which leads us to silence the voice of our own conscience, by exposing ourselves to the reproaches of others; took possession of my mind. I felt that at least to my Clarice, confession *must* be made. The opinion of others was comparatively indifferent; to possess their regard undeservedly, was a mat-

ter of little moment or interest; but my Clarice, her love and esteem was the treasure of my being; I could not endure the thought of being indebted for its preservation to falsehood and concealment.

> I dared to put it to the touch,
> To win or lose it all.

What she felt for me should at least be genuine, should be the result of truth. I could not, I dared not suffer the canker worm of a concealed secret to lie at the root of my best, my only happiness. I would tell Clarice how it had all happened; she might blame, she must blame me; yet I felt, even at that moment of self-reproach, that intentions so perfectly pure and innocent, and the sort of chain of circumstances that had almost forced me, as by a fate, into an action which had been the unfortunate cause of all this evil, could not but excite her compassion. I felt while I resolved to confess all to her, in some degree relieved; I thought she would pity, rather than detest; might blame, must lament; but would do any thing but hate me.

Dear recollections of those days, with all their sorrow, and all their anxiety! How my soul fondly lingers around you—as the fabled ghosts, the disembodied and mournful spirits, "lingering and sitting by a new-made grave," hang round the last traces of the feverish joy; the passionate grief; the agony; and the ecstasy of this scene of life and light....so does the spirit of the old man hesitate, vacillate, and delay round those remembrances of hope and love—reluctant to forsake the early bloom, the sweet morning of his youth, and proceed to darker and more fervid hours.

The meeting at the breakfast-table, the next morning, was much of the same character as that of the supper had been. The stern reserve and composure of Mr. de Vere, the proud resolution which supported him, the resolute rejection of all sympathy, the determined avoidance of all allusion to that of which all our hearts were full—diffused the same painful embarrassment around him.

Having finished his breakfast, and looked over his newspaper, without in any way interrupting the routine of his usual occupations, he rose and retired to his room.

The kindness of Mrs. de Vere and of Mrs. Fermor's manners to me, and the little affectionate attentions of Clarice, were again oppressing me with the most painful sense of my undeserving and unintentional hypocrisy. I could bear it no longer; and seeing Clarice leave the breakfast-room for the terrace, and slowly descend the steps of the garden, I followed her; resolved, at least as far as regarded this cherished of my soul, to relieve myself from the insupportable situation in which I stood.

She turned round as I followed her down the steps, and looking at me affectionately, said, "This is right, dear Edmund,—come out into the air. This sweet summer morning, this delightful quiet will refresh you. Dear Edmund! what a feeling heart you must have! what a generous sympathy! You seem to feel this still more acutely than we do ourselves."

"Stop, my Clarice, stop!" I cried, hastily. "You distress me beyond measure. Alas! you do not under-

stand my feelings. They are far less generous than you imagine. I have sources of pain."....

She looked up in my face anxiously, inquiringly, expectingly. I could have thrown myself at her feet, as there she stood, and poured out in one wild torrent, every feeling that was agitating my breast; but a something—a fear—an inconceivable dread of frightening her, of destroying the sweet security and serenity of our present intercourse, withheld me.

I controlled myself, and said, as calmly as I could, "Your kindness, and good opinion, Clarice, are the treasures of my existence; but dear as they are, I would rather forfeit them at once than owe them to deceit or hypocrisy. With you, my heart's....with you, dear, sweetest Clarice, at least, I will be candid and sincere. —You cannot guess the horrible share I have had in your father's disappointment."

She said nothing, but stared at me.

I then in a rapid, hurried manner, narrated the events of that evening when we had last parted.

As I went over my intolerable confession; the vexation with which I recollected what had passed; the provoking fatality under which I seemed to have acted, almost drove me mad. We had walked on, and had reached the hermitage as we walked, and arrived there, I flung myself quite overcome upon a seat, and burst into a passion of tears.

"But, dearest Edmund," said Clarice, sitting down by me, with the most touching kindness in her voice and manner. "I do not see, why you should reproach yourself so bitterly. To me, it seems as if you were

far more to be pitied than any one of us. Don't vex yourself so, Edmund; you are not in the least to blame. I am sure it was the most natural thing in the world, that you should wish to see Mount Sorel. And who on earth could have divined that a man, walking about the country in the strange manner you describe, should have had money to purchase such a place as this?

"Mrs. Fermor has taught me," she went on, "that we must submit to the consequences of our own involuntary mistakes, with patience. Remorse, self-reproach, and repentance, belong to our wilful errors, for such they will serve to correct; but unfortunate actions like the one you are vexing yourself about, no regret, no remorse, no experience can avert. We must bear them like other inevitable things. Dearest Edmund, she has taught me this;—pray don't be so unhappy!"

Such were the sweet, half-childish, half-womanly reflections of this lovely little philosopher. Such the first promise of an understanding that ripened in after years to such perfection.

I could have listened to her for a life. I was again dissembling. I refused to be consoled, that she might continue to console me.

When I was a little more composed, and had experienced the great relief that this confession had afforded me, we began to talk about her father. I dreaded the effort of making the same acknowledgment to him. I anticipated with a sort of horror the quiet, silent, yet deep and unchangeable effect which circumstances produced upon his temper. His wrath would

be overwhelming, and terrible if expressed; his silent alienation more terrible far.

"He will hate me!—he will detest me!" I cried. "He will not reproach, he will not perhaps even greatly blame, for he will be just, in the midst of his bitterest feelings: but he will hate, he will loathe me, as the author of this evil. He will look upon me as we look upon the venomous serpent, the poor enraged dog. We do not blame, but we abhor, the cause of horrid suffering. I know what he has felt. I guess what he must feel. He will detest me!"

Clarice grew pale as I spoke. The idea of her father's wrath was dreadful to her; once or twice, in the course of her short life, had she seen him, surprised out of the mastery of himself, by sudden and uncontrollable vexation—his rage had been terrible; but there was something in his hate, which, though we had never experienced its effects, we felt must be far more to be dreaded.

She said faintly, "Oh, Edmund! do not tell him."

"And yet, Clarice, to live in perpetual deceit. To receive the proofs of his kindness, his affection, and his friendship; a friendship and affection so precious, and so rare; and all the time to writhe under the secret consciousness, that it is his very confidence in me, which has undone him—that he is lavishing his kindness on the being that, unknown to himself, has stung him to the heart."

"That would be very dreadful," said she, musing, "and yet, Edmund, I have a sort of feeling, but—it is all confusion to me. I know that secrets, concealments,

mysteries, are hateful things. I love you too, for your abhorrence of them—and yet, it seems to me,—Will you let me ask Mrs. Fermor what she thinks? She is so wise and kind a friend; let me consult her, Edmund."

"My sweet and gentle counsellor—do it, if you think best. I am yours, to be guided by your advice. Alas! my Clarice! I am but as wax in your hands."

I do not think she heard this last sentence, for she had already risen and was leaving the summer-house.

She returned in about a quarter of an hour, and Mrs. Fermor was with her.

The good and sensible governess and friend, sat down by me, while Clarice remained standing; anxiously attentive to what was said.

"I am extremely sorry for you, Mr. Edmund," the grave and composed monitress began, "I need not tell you that. Circumstances, such as yours, have always appeared to me the most painful, and difficult, in our painful and difficult existence. I honour your delicacy, and your candour, in having confided all this to your friend, and almost sister—but I am inclined to agree with her, that, in this instance, confidence had better go no further."

After a pause, which I did not interrupt, for I sat in an attitude of mute attention, she resumed:

"I know, and I feel—no one can feel it more sensibly than I do—the danger, and the false wisdom, of disguises and concealments. No one can more entirely sympathise with the generous sincerity which scorns to cover the mischief it has done—the dignity which rejects with contempt, those false colours that may deceive

mankind, into an ill-deserved esteem. But my dear Edmund—excuse me for my familiarity—when we have been, however inadvertently, the authors of evil,—the first object of every good and honourable mind, the best and only compensation we can make, is by doing every thing that lies within our power, to soften and diminish the pain we have occasioned. Certainly we ought not to increase it, for the sake of our own relief."

"Good Heavens! Mrs. Fermor!" cried I, almost indignantly. "Could you suspect me of such weakness, and such cruelty?"

She went on—

"Then we must think of others rather than of ourselves. We shall be more generous, and probably more right, if we consider only that which will be best for Mr. de Vere. How we shall best spare his feelings, rather than how we shall relieve our own—intolerable as they are. This misfortune of yours, dear Edmund, is the result of one of the most innocent actions in the world: to visit a place advertised for sale, with a stranger, and to all appearance a poor man, seems really a step of so little significance that one cannot attach even the shadow of imprudence to it. It is not, my good friend, as if there were guilt—in that case, the mind must, and ought, to shake off the load by a frank confession, to the injured person: but here is no guilt, not the slightest atom of evil intention. Nor do I apprehend that any good can arise to Mr. de Vere from his knowledge of the fact. The thing is irremediable; it is done; it can neither be questioned nor altered. We must submit."

She stopped, I sighed heavily, but continued silent. Clarice bent a little forward in earnest attention.

"But Mr. de Vere's feelings may possibly be much embittered by the knowledge of the trifling circumstance, upon which a disappointment so severe has depended. The human mind submits to what appears a great unavoidable necessity; and none, more than Mr. de Vere, possess that calm strength of mind which bows to the inevitable. But the strongest mind revolts from the idea, of a wide-spreading evil resulting from a light, and insignificant, and, as it appears, almost fortuitous cause. —I think that vexation and secret irritability, which is the worst suffering in these cases, would be greatly increased by the knowledge of this strange, and apparently trifling, series of accidents. He would blame you, Edmund—he could not help it—and yet, he would accuse himself of injustice in doing so. He would know, that he ought to love you as well as ever; he would feel that he could not. A coldness, and mutual distrust, in spite of the most just and most candid feelings, on both sides, would separate you inevitably. This, I am sure I may say with truth, dear Edmund, would be a greater misfortune to Mr. de Vere, than it would be even to you. Besides, his mind might suffer from that same vexatious quarrel with itself, which so distresses and unhinges you; he might accuse his own weakness in having sought even one confidant of his schemes.—In short, dear Edmund, I think with Clarice, that nothing more had better be said upon the subject."

"You see, Edmund," interposed Clarice, as if much relieved that the danger of alienation on her father's part was removed; at least, such I flatter myself was the source of the deep interest she appeared to take in the question; "you see how wise and kind Mrs. Fermor is—you will take her advice, won't you?"

But Mrs. Fermor looked uneasy and irresolute, "Such is my advice, sweet Clarice," she said, "it is the best I can give under the present circumstances; but my children," looking at us both with anxiety, and her voice slightly trembling, "this is the first time in my life that I ever counselled dissimulation: that I ever said to the young, courageous, ingenuous heart, yearning to own itself in the wrong—be silent. Oh! do not let this occasion without example, without parallel, be a precedent in your mutual lives. My dear ones, hold fast by truth and sincerity; remember, where there is mystery there must often be wrong; where there is disguise there is rarely honour. Unhappy is the being who guides his course by casuistry; quitting the plain and direct line of truth and right, for devious doubtful ways. . . . My dear Edmund, it is because I cannot discern any possible evil, but much positive good, that may arise from thus sparing feelings already so cruelly lacerated and bleeding, that I counsel you to a step so contrary to all my instincts, and all my principles."

She was much agitated, more agitated than I had ever in my life seen her, or, than we either of us believed her capable of being.

We looked at one another, and exchanged a glance

of admiration. This was a beautiful sight: to see one of moral sense so pure and delicate, one so habitually and throughout life accustomed to act by the most direct and upright principles, thus shook and overcome by the slightest deviation even towards the doubtful.

Whether her advice was good or not, is hard at this moment to decide; but of this I am sure, that the impression made upon both of us by the pain she evidently endured, gave us an impression of the value of truth; and the evil nature of secresy and disguise; which we never forgot. May such be the effect, upon all who read these lines.

The rest of that day passed in tranquillity. Mr. de Vere sat rather more in his own room than was his wont; and instead of walking out in the afternoon, he remained in the blue drawing room; apparently occupied by a book, that he seemed to be reading.

Mrs. de Vere quietly pursued her usual occupations; and Clarice sat at her work, silent and languid. Her spirits had been over excited, and she seemed to demand repose. The decision of Mrs. Fermor had, however, quite satisfied and tranquillised *her* mind; but it was not so with mine. My spirits, though considerably relieved, were still agitated and depressed; and a kind and friendly word addressed to me from time to time by Mr. de Vere, made me start as if I had received a sudden blow.

I was, however, to go home the next morning; and for the first time in my life, I was glad to get away. My presence in these scenes was insupportably oppressive. My feelings were becoming diseased nervous,

and unreasonable; and I longed to compose them by reflection and absence.

"You will tell your father, Edmund," was the only sentence in which Mr. de Vere alluded to the subject; as he shook my hand kindly, and bade me farewell.

CHAPTER IX.

Mais quoi ! l'homme aux cents yeux n'a pas fait sa revue,
Je crains fort pour toi sa venue.

LAFONTAINE.

THE faint hopes held out by Mr. Lawson that the purchaser of Mount Sorel would prove, in the event, unable to come down with the purchase money, was altogether as illusory as all his other expectations had been.

Mr. Higgins' solicitors went through the necessary forms with all the promptness and precision of capital men of business; as they were; for Mr. Higgins was not in the habit of employing either dawdlers, or blunderers, in his affairs.

The titles examined, and the deeds prepared—the money, already lying in his banker's hands, was ready to be paid down on the moment; and Mr. Higgins returned from Paris, completed his purchase, and came down immediately to take possession.

He soon proved, that whatever might be his views and opinions, and however eccentric some of his ideas, he was no mere vain, and idle declaimer; but a man to

work out his principles, and carry them forth into action.

He had lashed with unsparing severity, the idle, careless, negligence of his predecessors; he showed that he had no inclination to slide into the same errors.

With a vigorous, straightforward good sense, for which he was remarkable, he immediately set about turning this large and neglected property, to the best advantage—both as regarded himself, and others.

Himself, first, though. For, in spite of the apparently levelling nature of his principles, no man adhered to rights of property, more decidedly than he did: that is to say, of property acquired as he would alone allow that it ought to be acquired,—by well-directed labour. On property, as derived from prescription, he looked with contempt: he regarded it as an injustice, committed on mankind in general. Not one acre of his own had been obtained in this way. His forefathers of the second degree had realised large fortunes by their bold and successful speculations, with the fruits of which this new property had been purchased: and he gloried in it.

The mystery which hides ancient origin in the night of ages; the distinction of a long untarnished descent and of long unquestioned possession; sentiments so deeply rooted in our nature, and which exercised so strong an influence, over the feelings of Mr. de Vere;—were as the most idle nonsense to this man of matter of fact, guided by the principles of pure reason alone.... as *he* thought.

Alas! for poor human nature. He had his romance

and his nonsenses; and his empty pride, and his childish imaginations, and his failings, and his follies, and his faults; as well as his neighbour.

But I was remarking upon his first inconsistency—the lively active interest this advocate for universal equality and agrarian laws, took in the improvement of his own property; and the absolute and very decided authority he proceeded to exercise, over every one of his dependants.

Not that I mean to blame him for this. I admire and I respect such clear and vigorous ways of acting. I hold in contempt that idle negligence, and indifference to a man's own interests, which, I believe, takes its rise, or usually has its termination, in nothing but a sickly indolence. Observe, I except from this sweeping sentence those blest spirits who have higher and grander vocations; those noble philanthropists who appear from time to time; who, "sell all that they have, take up the cross and follow me." But I agree with Bacon—Sell not all that thou hast, *unless* thou dost take up the cross, and follow me. Neglect not the common interests of every-day life—unless thou hast chosen that far higher and more glorious calling: unless thou be a Father Mathew, a Henry Martyn, a Howard..... Blessed and glorious Christians and men!

But that orderly, economic, well-arranged disposition of his temporal affairs, which arises from a man entertaining a just view of his own interests, and of the interests of those who depend upon him,—is an excellent thing in human life. For it ensures, when controlled by just and liberal views, a direct, wholesome, course

of action; which forces every body around into their duty, and constrains them to what is their own best interest; industry, and attention to what they are about.

Neither do I mean to say, that Mr. Higgins was a man without any feeling for his fellow-creatures. He was not an ill-natured man. But, certainly, his generous principles of universal philanthropy lay rather in his head, than in his heart. He thought he took, and he did take, great interest in the improvement and progression of his race; and was quite ready to assist, by his spirit, and energy, in sweeping away all obstructions which might retard such progression. But the tender heart, which melts at human suffering—whenever—wherever—or howsoever—were not for him. To great objects, he was ready, and professed to be ready, to make great sacrifices; and a very considerable amount of immediate human suffering would have been found among them.

He however justified his sarcastic censures upon the conduct of Mr. Entwistle, by pursuing a course diametrically the reverse.

What a sweep he made at Mount Sorel!

Down came dog kennels, loose boxes, hunting stables, &c., &c. Driven at once from the face of the earth, as by the besom of destruction. All that labyrinth of courts, and court-yards; of decayed roofs, interminable out-buildings, and I know not what besides —making Mount Sorel look more like an irregular cantonment, than a private gentleman's dwelling-house—down they came. Materials sold, cleared off in the

twinkling of an eye, and the ground levelled, dug, manured, planted; before you knew where you were.

Handsome modern stables and offices upon a reasonable, yet liberal scale, succeeded; in which not a tile was out of its place, not a morsel of timber defective, not a point of paint calling for renewal. A court-yard well paved, and clear as a floor from every weed, lay before them. The endless gardens; the long accumulation of walls, and palings; yew hedges, and slips, and plantations; the orchards of overgrown, mossy, barren trees; and straggling, bare-limbed bushes; shared the same fate: cleared as by the wand of the enchanter. A fine garden wall, covered with vigorous well-trained trees, surrounded by slips, came in their place. Capital hot-houses, succeeded to the big, ruined, broken down orangery: young, fresh, thriving, plantations to all the wilderness of disorder into which their predecessors had run. Such were his smaller operations.

Those more important consisted in bringing down an excellent man of business, and installing him as his agent. Farms were visited, tenants ejected or retained, leases granted or renewed, as the case might be; and every one treated according to his merits—tested by no very indulgent standard.

Neither Mr. Higgins, nor his agent, ever listened to excuses. Men were suddenly summoned to the bar, as to that of the last judgment; and negligence, slovenliness, waste, or disorder, found no indulgence. Off they went, and others came. Liberal advances were made to assist in the necessary improvements; fields were drained, which long neglect had covered with rushes; pastures

broken up, which were eaten up with weeds; lands laid down, exhausted by a course of racking crops. Farm buildings repaired, and, where wanted, erected; all delivered to a tenant in the nicest and most exact order; —and so expected to be maintained.

The transformation was as beautiful as it was magical. The ample purse and the immense activity of Mr. Higgins, overcame every difficulty, and seemed even to vanquish time;—it was astonishing with what rapidity he operated.

The bringing into order the extensive, and grievously neglected woods, was effected with admirable judgment; and a sum, as I have heard, realised by the active proprietor, amounting to nearly half the fee-simple of the estate. That unfortunate morning, when I had with so much difficulty prevailed upon him to visit Mount Sorel, his rapid glance had at once discerned the value of the property, thus abandoned and neglected; the beauty of the scenery had charmed, and the situation of the house pleased him; he had planned in five minutes how all was to be converted.

Our visit to the hill and to the woods had decided him; the immense quantity of timber falling to decay had not escaped his attention, nor had he overlooked the minerals upon the hill; he had a smattering of science; and he had picked up, among the stones which I have said that he carried away, specimens of the lead ore, the tradition of which had long died away from the memory of man.

Mr. Higgins had a large sum lying at his banker's; the aspect of political affairs in Europe, made him hesi-

tate as to investing it in the public funds. He saw this estate; and in his own prompt manner of seizing upon advantages, decided at once upon the purchase.

During his short walk with the landlord towards the coach, he had learned that the general impression throughout the country was, that a purchaser was lying by ready to take the market at advantage,—so believing no time was to be lost, he repaired immediately to London, possessed himself of the particulars, and made his offer . . . . . An offer so much more liberal, than any that Messrs. Tennison and Biggs had found the least reason to expect, that, as we have seen, they did not think proper to refuse it. The business was soon settled; and every thing concluded.

The country rang with Mr. Higgins's proceedings. He was blamed, praised, admired, wondered at—but, upon the whole, censure predominated: and a feeling of dislike, and a prejudice far from being in his favour, was generated among the country gentlemen, his neighbours.

It is one of the numerous petty injustices of human beings, that a man is not contented with enjoying his own sloth, and idleness; but he must object to the energy of others. As one, roused from his morning sleep by the healthful activity of a companion, groans, and grumbles, while his matinal associate creeps, or bustles about the room; and envious of the vigour he will not emulate, ends by resuming, in much ill-humour, his own unwholesome slumber;—so, the man too indolent for improvement, too listless for progression, with an obscure sense of all the waste and injury to himself

or others which his slothful inactivity occasions, looks with the greatest possible dislike upon the active, stirring spirit, starting forward, in the animating pursuit of the better.

He encourages himself in his obstinate and slothful adherence to old abuses, and ignorant practices—by stigmatising as theoretical and dangerous every alteration, however necessary; every improvement, however beneficial. All deviations of all descriptions, from the long-established, are with him wrong: for all have the one irremissible fault—of making a noise at six o'clock in the morning, when he chooses to sleep till nine.

So it was with the ordinary class of gentlemen about us;—not so, with my father. His sweet temper aided the clearness of his understanding; and he was incapable of envying the success of others, though, perhaps, without sufficient energy himself to attain it. He saw the necessity, and estimated the advantages of many of these things;—and yet the rage, at that time so prevalent, for universal change, under the idea of universal improvement, he steadily and invariably opposed.

His prepossessions clung to the *tried:* he distrusted expectations of theoretical perfection; and he could observe the canker in the bud, the small, almost imperceptible, but rapidly growing evil, too often insinuated under great changes. His inclination led him rather to desire the improvement of what *was*, than to sweep away all before him, and upon that *champ rasé* erect something altogether new. He had neither the daring, the activity, nor the contempt of consequences; that impelled Mr. Higgins. And with far more

tenderness for the sufferings of human nature, he had far less confidence in beneficial results from the uncontrolled action of human beings. I am afraid he considered the mass of mankind, as being still neither very wise nor very disinterested.

He was for making every body behave well,—men, women, and children;—but his means were so just, so gentle, so humane, in spite of their pretended severity, that his notions would probably have led to far more real freedom and happiness, than the wild defiance of authority and restraint advocated by Mr. Higgins.

He looked on, interested and amused by the proceedings of his animated neighbour. He had not called as yet upon him; a feeling of delicacy towards Mr. de Vere, had made him disinclined to be a visiter at Mount Sorel under present circumstances; and he lived so far off, that there was no incivility in the omission. But distant as we were, the report of these proceedings reached us from all quarters; and we both felt very great interest in every thing connected with the subject.

These tidings also reached Mr. de Vere. His old garrulous steward could not help entertaining him with all the gossip he could gather upon the subject. The good old servant was totally ignorant of what had been Mr. de Vere's views with respect to the property; but its vicinity to his master's estate of course rendered it an object of interest; and the old man would frequently terminate the long audiences in which he was indulged, by reverting to the subject.

CHAPTER X.

As a decrepit father takes delight
To see his active child do deeds of youth;
So I, made lame by Fortune's dearest spite,
Take all my comfort of thy worth and truth.
SHAKSPEAR.

"HE's a rare one, that," he began one day, after the usual business had been gone over. "He's a rare one—as bought the old place. Sure and certain, its many a long day, since such a one has been seen in these parts."

Mr. de Vere winced internally; but it was impossible for him to resist the curiosity he felt upon the subject; he looked up, and the old man went on.

"My stars, Sir! he's not the one as 'll let the grass grow under *his* feet. Such a sweep as he has made already. All the Entwistle rubbish, as I call it, cleared away.... Ah, Sir! them Entwistles were a sore evil in this country,—but that chap, Higgins, is quite a different guess sort of a matter.

"I hope," Mr. de Vere began, "that the poor, at least, will profit by this change."

"Law, Sir! you never saw the like. Why there's hosts of them employed—and at good smart wages too.

Why, Sir, it's a pleasure to hear on't. Such a stir through the whole country! Work at Squire Higgins', for all and every one,—but then, work they must. No slips-slops quarter-day work for him. He pays well, and makes them work well—and that's the man for my money."

"I am glad of it," said Mr. de Vere. "I had reason to think he was one of those newfangled, philosophical philanthropists, of whom we have lately heard so much."

"I don't know, what that same may be," responded the old man, "but I have heard say"—lowering his tone, "that he's somewhat a bit o' a Jacobin. Not knowing well, what that same means either—save that it seems to be a topsy-turvey sort o' a thing; wants to set the world heels uppermost. But Jacobin or phil—phil—phi..... call it, or be it what it may—a cleverer, activerer, sharper sort of a squire, has not been among our folk manys the long day. Law, Sir, he makes 'em look about 'em!"

"And what has he been doing?" asked the master, unable to resist the painful interest which attached to the subject.

"He's begun," said the old man, "first and foremost, a sweeping, and a sweeping down"....

"What?" cried Mr. de Vere, alarmed.

"Oh! all that mess o' dog-kennels, and stables, and things at the back o' the old house. But you don't know the place, Sir. You never saw such a Babel, of a place, as I may say, as was that..... Such a heap of old, dry, rotten rubbish got together. A stitch in time.... that

was never the Entwistle fashion. No care, no thought, in that misfangled house, Sir! Bad man that. When one thing got out of repair, build up another, that was the word—for Squire Entwistle was one o' the *must haves*, as I call 'em, Sir. A family that always rides post on the high road to ruin..... *Must have* this—*must have* that—*must have* a quite new stable, and dog-kennel, was the last word; and see what a power of money that alone, cost him. And all for this Higgins, like, to sweep clean away."

"I don't think him so much mistaken there. But are there no other changes?" said Mr. de Vere, in a low voice. "No other things he is expected to sweep away?"

"Ay, ay, Sir, be sure o' that. He'll sweep away loads and loads of fine timber, and put a power o' money in his pocket. Be sure o' that, Sir."

"Cut down the woods!" exclaimed Mr. de Vere.

"Plenty to take, and plenty to leave. Thin 'em, Sir, only thin 'em as they ought to be, and as they ought to have been these fifty years back. Ah, Sir! it's a fine estate, racked and ruined as it has been. You should have thought o' that purchase, Sir; as I once, or twice took the liberty to hint to your honour. The timber alone!... Why that Higgins will make a power o' money by it."

An involuntary sigh escaped Mr. de Vere.

"And what will he do to the house?

"Now, Sir, *that's* what I call queer in him. He's a *new* man, your honour,—altogether, a *new* man, Sir. Why his grandfather, as I have heard say, came from a

place down in the north, Sir—I forget its name—but he was a poor, ragged boy, taken up as a charity, to oil the engine wheels,—in some of these new great factories down there. And the young fellow had a head, Sir; and so, he peeped, and he peered about; and he got to understand the fashion of all those sort of merry-go-rounds. And so, Sir, he got grand secrets—and the long and short of it is—that same was the making of them all. And a power of money this Higgins has, Sir."

"But the house?" said Mr. de Vere, rather impatiently.

"Oh ay, Sir,—why, I was saying, it was queer that one of these *new* men, Sir—should set store by them things.—Those rare old houses, like Mount Sorel manor house..... Why, Sir, it might have been yourself. Won't have a stone touched.—Not a window-frame, or a corbel, or a bit of carved work,—only all put into beautiful and complete repair.—I'd have thought he'd have been for pulling that down too; and for building one o'them, staring windowed, red, new houses, just like one of their stinking manufactories.....No such thing—he seems to like the antiquity, Sir, of the poor old place."

Was Mr. de Vere pained or pleased at this?—Pained. All was pain upon this subject; he detested the idea of this *new* man, inhabiting the old house of his fathers; he would rather, perhaps, it had been swept away too.

"And the ruins?" at last he said.

"Aye, Sir, there be some old ruins under the Red Castle Hill.—Can't justly say, what he'll do with them. Most like he'll call *them* old rubbish—and sweep away, slip slap, dish dash, as he's done with the Entwistle

litter. Can't say for certain, what he'll do with the ruins—can't say whether they be to be swept away or not."

The ruins!—Yes, they would in all probability be swept away too, before this new man—this active, vigorous stranger—who seemed to come forward as the type of that destructive torrent, which threatened to submerge all he had loved and reverenced.

The times in which he lived—the mighty changes that hung threatening over society—the dark clouds big with unrevealed forces, gathering on all sides of the horizon—added strength to the personal melancholy of Mr. de Vere, and depth to his feelings.

Resolved, as he had been, never to set foot upon, never even to turn his eyes towards, the lost estate of his ancestors; a sort of invincible desire impelled him, at this moment, to visit once more those relics; so soon, as he imagined, to be swept from the face of the earth.

It was a dark, windy, cold evening; black clouds swept over the moon; and the heavy branches of the trees, swinging in the wind, threw their drear shadows across his path; as, silent as a ghost, and fearful of being seen as the prowling thief, this haughty and unhappy man traversed his own woods; and arrived at the brook, and at the bridge, that separated him from his neighbour.

Shall we say his almost detested neighbour?—For, in Mr. de Vere's heart—a heart hardened by pride, and perverted by the vain prejudices of his situation—vexation and disappointment were fast assuming the form of personal hatred.

He always felt a secret aversion towards any rising man, whose talents were advancing him to a share in distinctions which he deemed to belong, by prescription, to his own peculiar class; and he never could look upon concessions made to the advancing spirit of commercial wealth, but as a species of injustice.

How much, therefore, he felt inclined to dislike Mr. Higgins may be easily divined.

But it was, at this moment, with melancholy rather than with bitterness in his heart, that he passed over the little bridge, and clear, hurrying stream; and traversing the deep woods of his more fortunate rival, approached the, to him, hallowed spot, where the ruins of the old chapel lay.

The moon gleaming from time to time, between the heavy hurrying clouds, threw streams of light at intervals, among the deep shadows of the place, as, descending to the chapel floor, he stood mournfully gazing upon the tomb of the crusader.

There *he* slept in his time-honoured grave—and a vision of those days of chivalry gone by, passed, as in a trance, through the mind of his unhappy descendant.

One long series of ruins! The ruins of all that was venerable and dear to him lay before him! . . . A new world—a new day was rising!—cloudy, turbulent, and stormy: and his family was descending, with the things gone by, into the tomb.

One frail, but precious creature, represented that house, once supported by the wise and the brave, the desperate in battle, and the high in council. One em-

barrassed, and unprofitable estate, was all that remained of the wide-spread possessions of the past.

The moment had been, when he had thought .... when his hand seemed already to have grasped that, which was to restore so much.... Another had stept between. It was to his melancholy imagination, as the type of his age.

The heart of the last De Vere gave way, and a few tears fell, as he bent low his head over the ancient tomb.

It was very late when he returned home; bidding, as he thought, a last farewell to those hallowed remains, so soon to be annihilated by the hand of improvement.

But in this he was destined to be mistaken.

Mr. Higgins had, in this matter, behaved with his usual originality. Family pride, he despised; the dignity of a long descent he ridiculed; as was the fashion with him and many others of his day, by any thing not exactly founded on reason,—as they called it. They seemed to forget that man has other qualities—his imagination for instance; and if that is not excited by high things, that the man will become but a poor, sordid, selfish and sensual creature after all. This, however, by the way. But, in the midst of this daring contempt for much that men had been long accustomed to respect and reverence, Mr. Higgins possessed a very lively imagination of his own. An imagination that could be worked upon by historic recollections and tales of by-gone days—as well as other people's. And these ruins were exceedingly to his fancy.

He would not have had a stone touched for the world. He had them cleared, so as to prevent, as far as could be done, the farther injuries of time:—but the ivy still hung over the time-honoured vestiges; the sun yet shot his slant beam through the flourished Gothic window; and lighted the cold marble figures on the tombs.

Another peculiarity too, distinguished this eccentric man. He had the greatest love for the beauties of nature; and took a singular interest in the preservation of those wild animals still to be found, in the remote corners of this improvement-loving country. Not a gun was to be fired upon the Mount Sorel estate; it was to be a sort of Eden of refuge for every bird, and beast, and creeping thing. The owls hooted in the woods; the hawks soared against the clear blue sky; the shrubberies re-echoed with the song of the thrush and blackbird. What effect this plan of proceeding had upon his game and upon his gardens, I never learned; he seemed not to have quite so many pheasants and partridges as other people; but the productions of his orchards and kitchen-gardens were unrivalled.

Altogether, his domain was a charming place,—so wild, and yet so well kept up; and peopled with this happy community of living things; it was rendered cheerful and entertaining to every lover of nature.

These proceedings of Mr. Higgins were, of course, spread over a considerable portion of time, and occupied at least two years; a great part, however, of which was spent by him, as it will be seen, abroad, and more especially at Paris, then the centre of universal interest.

To return to my own affairs.

I was, as I have said, most impatient to set out for the continent. The uneasiness I felt at the idea of meeting Mr. de Vere, had increased upon me; and, in spite of my passion for Clarice, I could find no rest but in the thought of getting away and beginning the tour, which my good father had planned.

He had written to Mr. Broadhurst, the travelling tutor, and had made very particular inquiries about the young gentleman whose companion I was to be. This answer was not long in arriving—and, to my inexpressible satisfaction, informed us that his name was Reginald Vernon.

I have never mentioned this young man until now: but I had known and loved him, for some time. Reginald! Generous—joyous—Reginald! How shall I find words to convey a just impression of the fascinations of thy character? Thy bright blue eyes, instinct with vivacity and spirit; thy beautiful features; thy curling brown hair so lightly waving; that symmetrical figure formed alike for graceful and vigorous action; that cheering laugh, that infectious gaiety, before which dulness and melancholy melted away as morning mists before the sun!....

I loved thee—who but must have loved thee—who but must have loved that warm, candid, generous temper; that honest, and affectionate heart.

But to me, with my reserve, my languid spirits, my constitutional inertness both of body and soul—that weight oppressive, which I could so rarely throw off—thy presence was *life* and *light*.

And, thou too, dear Reginald, thou too, no doubt,

didst feel a certain enjoyment, when the bright beams of thy intellect played on and illuminated this clay;—summoning into fitful existence the ardent spirit, that struggled for expression within.

I had first met Reginald Vernon at the —— Academy, where we had been educated together; and had been drawn towards each other by that sort of attraction which often unites oppositions.

And now this agreeable fellow was to be the companion of my travels. You may guess how pleased I was. It is not easy to say how very much I liked Reginald then, or how warmly I soon learned to love him. — My whole existence has been made up of my affections;—Reginald and Clarice!—my heart has been divided between them.

I have loved them, not as men usually love. My friendship for Reginald has had almost the force of a passion—my love for Clarice all the strength and constancy of a friendship. In them I have lived.

And now, when the unhappy accident which had clouded my enjoyment at Holnicote had made me nervously desirous to get away; to change the scene; and to forget the vexations and regrets of the past;—it is needless to express with what satisfaction I turned to the idea of Reginald. As the one thing still left in life, on which this shadow that had darkened my existence would not fall.

With what expectation of relief, I clung to his idea! —to the remembrance of his courageous and cheerful spirit—and trusted that its influence would dispel the painful ideas that saddened me. I should receive fresh life from

the animating society of Reginald. And, by a good fortune, which in my depression of spirit I had thought never under any form would again be mine. Reginald was to be the companion of my travels.

My father, upon receiving this information, acceded to the plan with the greatest alacrity.

He was a father such as there are few to be found. Mothers tender, disinterested, generously devoted to the best happiness of their offspring, are not rare—it is the precious attribute of their sex; but fathers seldom look upon their sons with an affection so pure and genuine. They are too apt to regard them merely as the instruments of their ambition—as those who shall complete the schemes of life they have themselves commenced; or else, as very expensive and troublesome burdens, to be shoved off into the great ocean of life, to struggle and fight it out as best they may. The generous attention to a son's best happiness, that true test of real affection, is too often wanting. But my father had the kindest regard for mine.

Perhaps, his more than common tenderness was occasioned by the early loss of my mother;—and his compassion was excited for the helpless little boy; possessing no near female relation; and who was thrown entirely upon his gentleness and humanity, for all his enjoyments.

He invariably proved to me, the most indulgent, and the most valuable of friends; as well as the most charming of companions. I admired, as much as I loved and honoured him.

We had no secrets. On my return home I had con-

fessed to him the vexatious cause of Mr. de Vere's disappointment.

I saw that he was excessively annoyed at it; but he would not wound me. He did his best to conceal a mortification that it was impossible for him, altogether, to disguise.

I saw clearly, that he sympathised with Mr. de Vere far more strongly than I did. At my age, and with my temper, any disappointment in which love has no share, excites after all but a feeble interest: but my father was no longer young,—and he understood how many, and how strong, are the passions which yet survive, when the first wild insanity of love is over.

He could appreciate the bitterness, with which this destruction of so many desires, and of so many plans, must have fallen upon his friend's heart.

I related to him the conversation with Mrs. Fermor.

"I agree with her," said he, "she decided like a woman of sense, as she is. But let neither of us forget, Edmund, that it is the duty of us both by every means that may possibly present themselves, to repair the evil you have so inadvertently occasioned. This is one of those fine obligations which bind the man of honour. A claim upon you, which no man could perhaps precisely assert, and certainly which no man could enforce. —It rests upon your own conscience, and sense of justice alone..... Such is true honour, Edmund."

I was never demonstrative; I could rarely express what I most strongly felt; I made no answer; but the words sank into my mind, he saw that they did, and was satisfied.

He comprehended the uneasy feelings, which would for the present make me less happy at Holnicote than I had formerly been, and he did not seem to regret it. His whole mind was now engaged on this tour. He was extremely impatient for me to set out.

July and August were now passed; it was September before all our various preparations were completed; and my father set out with me for London, to join Mr. Broadhurst and his pupil.

We had, among other causes of delay, been waiting for Reginald, who had been engaged, since we parted at the academy, in touring throughout Scotland and Ireland: portions of the empire then but rarely visited, and where, in the more remote parts at least, communications were so uncertain and slow, that I had neither heard from him, nor he from me, upon the subject of the projected scheme.

It was early in September when my father and I arrived in town, and took up our abode at the Old Hummums in Covent Garden, at that time a very fashionable hotel; and we had just finished what was considered a late dinner, at four o'clock, when the door opened, and Mr. Broadhurst and Mr. Vernon were announced.

CHAPTER XI.

" Es bildet ein Talent sich in der Stille,
Sich ein Charakter in dem Sturm der Welt,"

SAYS Goethe.

I am sure no one wanted the last advantage more than I did, as my judicious father was well aware.

We were very fortunate in our travelling tutor. Mr. Broadhurst was a learned scholar, and a thoroughly accomplished man; admirably calculated for the office he undertook. He understood the world too well, to play the part of severe censor, with the young men entrusted to his care; but he was himself, a man of such high principles, both as regards rectitude and purity of morals, that there was a sort of *infection* of goodness, if you will pardon the phrase, in his very company. You learned to love and esteem qualities, adorned by so much intellectual power and by manners so refined,—and a young man would have felt ashamed, and degraded in his own opinion, had he yielded to temptations or indulged in excesses, so foreign to the fine and delicate sentiments

and habits of him, with whom he was so closely associated.

Of all the good influences that pervade society, such infection, as I have called it, is perhaps the very best.

Mr. Broadhurst was also a man of fine taste, as well as of astonishing information; and he failed not to arouse in his companions, an interest for all they saw; and that taste for the beautiful and the grand, which refines the thoughts, fills up the vacant hours, raises the tone and temper of youth, and forms the best defence against those vices and follies, which are chiefly, in such early and ingenuous years, the mere result of having nothing to do—and little to care about.

He came in looking very agreeable; though it must be confessed there was a slight formality in his manners; he was followed by Reginald.

Reginald sprang forward, hand extended to meet mine. He had already been informed that we were to travel together, and had received the intelligence with as much pleasure as I had myself. I think I see him now —with his frank cordial manner—coming forward, looking so handsome, and so pleasant.

I presented him to my father; they seemed mutually pleased with each other. And then, my father introduced me to Mr. Broadhurst.

We all sat down and began to talk; and soon fell to arranging the plan of our proceedings, and settling the day when we should actually set out.

"My father," said Reginald, "writes me word that he would like to accompany us to Paris,—and, perhaps, as far as Nantes or Orleans. It is his suggestion," turn-

ing to my father, "that we should spend the ensuing autumn and winter travelling through France. He wishes me, he says, to make myself well acquainted with the state of things, in a country which he considers to be upon the eve of great changes. I believe he sends me there in winter, that I may learn what misery is.... I have seen enough of that, where I have just come from. All this, however, is subject to your approbation, Sir."

"I think you will approve of Mr. Higgins' idea," began Mr. Broadhurst, deliberately.

"Higgins!" I cried, looking at Reginald. "Can that be your father's name?"

"Why, Edmund," said he, laughing, "thou hast a droll way of forgetting things. Did I never impart to thee the fact, that my father's name and mine were different?"

"Indeed if you did I never paid attention to it—and yet, now I remember that I must have known it. But it had escaped my recollection... Higgins," I repeated.

"And why not Higgins?" said he.

My father and I exchanged glances.

"He has lately purchased an estate not very distant, I think, Sir, from the place where as Edmund informed me—I don't forget names as he does—you lived. Mount Sorel, he tells me, is a very beautiful thing. Do you happen to know it, Edmund?"

"To be sure, I do," said I, turning my head away.

"It is, as I understand, a very fine place," said my father, "but I have never seen it."

"I should very much have liked," continued Reginald, "to have been allowed to run down, and get a glimpse of it myself. But my father is rather absolute in his ideas; and he will allow of no such waste of time, as he calls it. I expect him to be in town to-morrow; and then I shall have the honour, with your permission, of making you acquainted."

Neither my father nor I said more upon the subject at present—and we continued the discussion of our plans.

It was settled that we should set forward in the course of the week. We proposed in the first place to make the tour of France;—to visit the Pyrenees; perhaps, if the time would allow, take a glance at Switzerland; and be ready to meet Mr. Higgins again in Paris in the following spring, to be present at the opening of the States General.

"Mr. Higgins," said Mr. Broadhurst, "makes a *sine quâ non* of that condition, and I think he is right. No event in modern history has at any time appeared so big with consequences, as this will in all probability be."

"You young men are singularly fortunate," remarked my father, "to travel in such interesting and stirring times. I thought myself lucky at your age, to be in Germany at the close of the war of '59..... But what were the contests of princes, about a few leagues of territory—to the grand debate now going on, in France! I think, Broadhurst, I shall myself be disposed to make one of the party; and to join the rendezvous at Paris next April. In the meantime, young gentlemen, keep your eyes open; and note

well the things that *be*, for I prophecy that they will not *be* long."

And so, my agreeable acquaintance of the little inn —the almost detested purchaser of Mount Sorel—and the father of my friend, were one.

It may appear strange, that this circumstance had not struck me when I saw the name in Mr. Lawson's letter. I do recollect that when I read the name Higgins, it did sound like an old memory; but one rarely puts together things so remote, as I imagined young Vernon and Mount Sorel to be.

We set out upon our travels.

Mr. Higgins had joined us in London.

When we met, he gave me a very hearty recognition; and seemed delighted to see his companion of the little inn, and rainy night, again: I was less pleased to see him,—indeed, I felt almost sulky at first; but my ill-humour speedily yielded to his frankness and cordiality. There was that in him which, to me, was irresistibly agreeable; and I soon became as much fascinated as before by his original views, and animated conversation.

We left London late in September; and after beating about two or three days on the river, and in the channel, arrived, disgusted with packet boats and sea-breezes, before the gates of Calais.

Jean Crapaud was, still, what old caricatures and prints have represented him;—the lean, half-starved, lively, fiddling, dancing, amiable being, that Sterne and Moore have painted. I could have laughed,—and Reginald shouted with delight, at seeing the identical figure of Hogarth's "Gates of Calais," still standing there.

But, as we proceeded, things began to assume a different aspect. The summer had been most disastrous; that hailstorm which had exercised so strange an influence over my fortunes, had been felt as is usually the case, with far more severity upon the continent. The devastation that it had produced in France was terrific. The crops had been almost completely destroyed; the hopes of the vintage annihilated; and the dread of approaching famine, was already beginning to add its exasperation, to all the various causes of dissatisfaction which at this time agitated the country.

The gay carelessness of the French peasant, had not, it is true, as yet, entirely forsaken him—but there were clouds of discontent, and lines of moody thought on many a brow which, but a few years before, would, even in the worst of times, have been all cheerfulness, politeness, and lively good humour.

The wretchedness of the common people, no longer relieved by their inexhaustible gaiety, now appeared in all its deformity; and observing these things as I did, under the influence of Mr. Higgins's opinions, they made the deepest impression upon my heart.

I say his influence, for already had he obtained an influence over my mind which gave the bias to so many years of my life; and has had a lasting effect in the formation of my character.

Young, generous, and strongly susceptible of impressions, I seized with enthusiasm upon the ideas he presented. The aspect of misery before my eyes, was sufficient to arouse any man of feeling:—and the causes of that misery I readily attributed, as he did, to the

long ages of oppression under which the country had languished. I hailed that rising day-star of liberty, which he pointed out to me, with a rapture at least equal to his own, and shared in the intoxication with which the world was reeling.

It would be difficult, nay, impossible to convey to you, any adequate idea of the enthusiastic emotions of those days—the ecstasy, with which the dawn of that liberty and happiness, so fondly anticipated, was greeted. It was, as if the very air you breathed was inspiring. But it is vain to attempt to make you sympathise with these rapturous anticipations. Those who have seen the reverse of the picture, cannot realise them.

We arrived at Paris.

We had excellent introductions, and were speedily received into the very best company. We frequented the delightful *soupers* of that great world; at this moment, probably, composing the very best society that has been seen in modern times. What a curious, interesting medley it was! of philosophers, *petit maîtres*, statesmen, poets—the most fascinating women of genius and the most elegant women of fashion. What delightful conversation we enjoyed! no pedantry—no boring—yet nothing of the elegant insipidity of our present mode. Every thing was discussed. No subject was too recondite or abstruse—too sentimental or too romantic, to engage these charming people. How lightly and brilliantly was all handled! How did every subject acquire fresh interest—the darkest become lucid, the gravest animating—when touched by these true artists in conversation! Well might my father congra-

tulate us, upon the moment chosen for our travels—we arrived just in time to see the last of an aspect of society, such as, in all probability, the world will never behold again.

The elements of which it was constructed have disappeared, to make way, we will trust, for far more valuable things; but one cannot help sometimes wishing, that this leaf had been taken out of their book, as the saying is, before it was burned.

I was so enchanted with what I saw—and still more with what I heard, that I became most unwilling to leave this exciting scene, in order to visit those remote and almost barbarous provinces, laid down in Mr. Higgins' programme.

Mr. Broadhurst, however, and Reginald, resolved to persevere in the original plan. Reginald had much more bodily activity, and mental enterprise than fell to my share; and he greatly preferred the labours and difficulties of a tour in winter through these semi-civilised districts, to the fascinations of that society, which to me was so inexpressibly attractive.

Not that you must fancy me taking a forward or distinguished part in these brilliant reunions, or captivated by the charms of the agreeable and high bred women, who played so prominent a part in them. Reginald was much better fitted for this than I was, though he seemed to care little about it.

You must imagine Edmund, well, but plainly dressed, occupying some obscure corner in these magnificent apartments; listening greedily, drinking in with all his ears, the splendid paradoxes, the intoxicating visions,

the lively sarcasms, the gay repartees, that crackled and sparkled around him. Above all, you must fancy him hanging upon the lips of one of those philosophers, who had assumed to themselves without appeal, the sceptre of truth and right reason; and gathering their axioms with earnest attention, to be laid up as the rarest of treasures in his heart. All the best qualities of my mind, and all its worst defects, were alike called into play.

I could not endure the idea of exchanging all this excitement for mere valleys, rocks, and mountains, so, as long as Mr. Higgins remained in Paris, I staid with him, and when he returned to England, I crossed France; and travelling through Auvergne, and the volcanic valleys of the Vivarais, rejoined Reginald and Mr. Broadhurst, who had by this time reached Toulouse.

I have said, that it would be vain to attempt to give you an idea of the ferment that at this time agitated Paris. The enthusiastic anticipations of the middle classes; the ill-concealed apprehensions of the court and higher nobility; the tumultuous stormy aspect of the lower orders; the distress for bread; the crowds at the bakers' doors—the dark ominous figures, quite unknown to every one, and rising no one knew from whence—that were to be seen, mingling with the people on every occasion of tumult!

In the provinces things were no better. The elections were proceeding amidst the greatest agitation; while the distress among the lower orders, in this terrific winter, mocks description. A winter journey through France in the years 1788—9, inclusive, was enough to make the stoutest heart bleed.

We returned in April to meet my father and Mr. Higgins, and to be present at that Assembly of the States General, upon which the eye of the whole civilised world was fixed.

All Europe was aroused, and stood awaiting in a sort of rapturous expectation, the result of the mighty experiment about to be tried in France.

Hearts were beating high with an enthusiasm and ecstasy of hope which is indescribable; and mine, impressible and inexperienced as I was, responded warmly to the universal sentiment. Looking back upon those days, I may be allowed to marvel at the blind confidence with which we relied upon measures, so little governed by sound principle, so little guided by prudence, so evidently, in many cases, the mere result of vanity, envy, or the most sordid desire of personal gain.

But, alas! for young human nature, ignorant even of the workings of its own heart; it is not till we have experienced the pride, the selfishness, the folly, and the vanity, which mingle with our own feelings, that we detect those fatal springs of action in others; and learn to reverence the strong authority of law, and ancient custom, which resist the influence of violent and sudden changes.

They had fine words in their mouths, those friends of liberty in France;—but when they had succeeded in levelling all those barriers opposed to their hasty presumption, what ensued? a state of anarchy and disorder unparalleled in the history of man; a state in which every man found himself without defence, in the power of any other man, more unprincipled, more violent,

more audacious than himself; a state where the weak were without protection, the timid without refuge, the good without support! No fierce contests of the most ambitious monarchs, no injustice of the most barbarous tyrant, could ever exceed, in reckless and selfish cruelty, the contests and the wild injustice of the French Convention; or display more emphatically the necessity of some strong coercive resistance to the passions, and the selfishness of man.

The tremendous story of the French Revolution, stripped of the vain illusions with which the imaginations of men have invested it, will prove a treasury of knowledge in human nature and human affairs.

And there are, as some think, signs of the times, which would incline them to wish that page of history represented in its bare reality, and studied as it ought to be.

But enough, and more than enough of this; my business is to paint what I saw and felt, and leave others to draw the inference.

I felt then, excited to the highest possible degree, and filled with enthusiasm and expectation. My heart, which during the course of my travels, had so often bled at the prospect of arrogance and servility, luxury and misery, oppression and revolt, in fierce and terrible contrast with each other; swelled at that voice which bade the chains fall from all hands, and the tyrant's iron sceptre be no more.

Universal freedom! Universal equality! Universal brotherhood! Universal peace and happiness!—Such were our dreams.

Alas! to be drowned in what a torrent of blood and tears!

Vast destruction! Mighty ruin! Funeral of the Middle Ages! with all their magnificence, their pomps, their ideal beauty, their tender superstitions, their honourable chivalry—their sins, their sorrows, their oppressions, and their crimes.

A new world—a new race—new modes of thought—new forms of life succeed. Oh! may that great Spirit who alone converts the end of all things! call forth out of this struggling chaos in which we are blindly and darkly fighting our way, a purer, a fairer, and a better structure of society.

Is it so to be?—or, dark and spectral vision of evil! "When the Son of Man cometh, will he find faith upon the earth?"

We found Mr. Higgins in a state of high excitement; and prepared to adopt any extravagances, and go any lengths, with the democratical party, now distinctly assuming a form, as a party. He had become intimately acquainted with Mr. Thomas Paine—and from that *accomplished* statesman, and most *cautious*, *prudent*, and *amiable* man, he had already imbibed those more energetic principles, which produced, in the result, such unheard of effects.

My father was more cool and temperate. He approved of much, and hoped for much, and dwelt with satisfaction upon many of the changes which had been

effected; but he was cautious, and discerning—and, in that contempt for established law, and established authority, which was already beginning to make itself felt, —and, in those false principles upon the subject of order, obedience, and regard to the rights of property, which he saw advocated—he already thought he discerned the seeds of the frightful anarchy which, in the course of three short years, ensued.

It was singular—but it is a sort of thing which we may observe to happen every day; that while Mr. Higgins' sentiments exercised so much influence over my mind, Reginald seemed to be a disciple of my father. He had never, at the academy, been an advocate for those ultra liberal doctrines, in religion, morals, and politics, which possessed so many of us. He was of an ardent, rather than an enthusiastic temper, and possessed of a remarkably sound understanding.

We were all at Versailles, and placed in an excellent position to see the deputies pass, on that eventful morning, when the States General first assembled.

It was a very solemn spectacle!

The king—not yet stripped of any of the insignia of his regal splendour—came first, in a lofty triumphal car; surrounded by the members of his court and family; all splendidly dressed, and glittering with jewels.

The noblesse walked next, dressed in their gorgeous mantles and white plumes of feathers, their feudal swords by their sides; in all the pomp and magnificence proper to the finest and proudest nobility in Europe.

Then came the clergy—the splendid hierarchy of the

Catholic church—in elaborate dresses of purple and gold; followed by the inferior ecclesiastics, in long black mantles and three cornered hats.

Last of all, the double representation of the Tiers Etat—in their black dresses, short black cloaks, and plain round hats.... But, towards these the eyes of all were directed; curiosity was, almost, absorbed in them.

The loveliness of the day; the crowds that lined the streets; the houses gay with tapestry, and every window filled with beautiful women in full dress; the clang of music; the hoarse yet stilly murmur of the assembled multitude; rendered this the noblest spectacle, I had then, or have ever since witnessed.

My enthusiasm was excessive—tears of rapture, of which I was not ashamed, filled my eyes—as the long and sacred train; the harbingers, as I fondly hoped, of quite a new, and far better order of things; slowly defiled before me....

Mr. Higgins, and a few of his particular friends, were at some little distance from us, engaged in deep conversation; and at times testifying their enthusiasm in the most energetic manner.

My father looked at me—he saw, but he did not blame my emotion; he said, however,

"Let us wait the conclusion, before we rejoice without measure, Edmund: this is but the first act of a very long story."

We remained in Paris for some time after this; my father, and Mr. Higgins alike, taking the deepest interest in the proceedings of what soon became, the National Assembly.

Reginald and I were in Paris on the 12th, 13th, and 14th of July; and were actual spectators of the taking of the Bastile.

There are impressions ineffaceable by years.

Still I see those splendid regiments, the Royal Allemand, the Gardes Françoises, with the Prince de Lambesq at their head, parading the streets—still I hear the lugubrious voice of the tocsin sounding from every steeple in ancient Paris. I see the surging populace sweeping down the dark, lofty, narrow streets; I hear the cannon of the Bastile; the click of the musketry; the enthusiastic shouts of the multitude. I witness their heroic courage, their passionate excitement; and I see the mighty, and invincible ocean of human beings, bursting with overwhelming force through the vain intrenchments of tyrannic power.

That was a noble spectacle! but it was a spectacle already, alas! stained and polluted with that blood, which was soon in such torrents to flow.

But the dark edifice! It had taken such unhallowed hold upon the imagination! standing there a type, as it were, of the barbarous injustice of ages.

Was there a heart that rejoiced not in its overthrow? Mine did—Reginald's did—Mr. Higgins exulted aloud. Even my temperate father, though he shook his head, yet he could not but rejoice.

After that we parted. Mr. Higgins and my father returned for the present, to England—while Mr. Broadhurst, Reginald, and I, pursued our course to Italy.

It was no small matter to visit Italy in those days; and to cross Mount Cenis, then so rarely traversed. The barriers which fenced in la bella Italia, had not as yet been levelled by the pioneering hand of the man of ages, and it was reckoned quite an enterprise to achieve them.

With Italy, Reginald and I were equally in raptures. Assisted by the fine taste, and immense treasure of historic recollections, possessed by Mr. Broadhurst, we saw that delightful country to the best advantage. We had abundant letters and introductions, and here also we gained an entrance into the best society.

We spent a delightful winter.

In the spring, we again traversed the Alps, and arrived in Paris to rejoin Mr. Higgins; and to be present at the Federation in the Champ de Mars, on the 14th July, 1790.

My father this time, did not join us, so Mr. Higgins and I had it all our own way. We both worked lustily with our spades, in the preparation of the Champ de Mars for the august ceremony—even Reginald and Mr. Broadhurst lent a hand....

After that, we visited Germany and Poland, and returning by Prussia and the Netherlands rejoined Mr. Higgins, at Paris, in the spring of 1791.

The space of time which we had occupied in travelling through so large and interesting a portion of Europe —improving our taste, increasing our knowledge, and receiving such additional polish to our manners, as courts and the first society in the world could give—had

been employed in a very different manner by Mr. Higgins.

He had been frequently in Paris during our absence; had become an associated member of the Jacobin Club; was very intimate with all the leading characters in that Legislative Assembly, which was already urging forward the Revolution with strides so rapid—*downwards*—as many thought; and had assumed the manners and habits, with the principles then beginning to prevail.

This had not improved him,—the contempt for the idle shows and observances of life, which had given so much spirit and originality to his manners and conversation, was rapidly degenerating into a certain coarseness, and rudeness, into which it seems the tendency of man's nature to slide, when not restrained, and that pretty tightly too, by the laws of habitual good-breeding. Not that I was altogether aware of this defect at the time.

There was something, to me, inexpressibly fascinating in the energy and simplicity of his principles, his disregard of external distinctions, his disdain of outward seeming, his enthusiasm for freedom and for nature—it was all so congenial to my temperament. My shyness, my hesitations, my want of harmony with myself, and with the external world—which all my experience of courts and salons could not cure, were so much relieved by it. These vexatious feelings seemed to leave me, when I breathed the free atmosphere of this new world. I was like Friday when he casts off the sailor's

garb, when released by the new school from so much ceremonial observance.

A certain native delicacy and refinement preserved me from giving into the rude, overbearing ways of many of our friends; ways, which they dignified with the name of simplicity—but I tolerated that, in them, which would have been, before I left England, insupportable. Altogether I was, perhaps, among the few who really did improve under these new principles of good breeding: I certainly became more manly and consistent in my bearing; and, as far as my own feelings were concerned, much more comfortable.

As for Reginald, he openly professed his disgust, and dislike, for the whole clique. A *modéré* he began, and a *modéré* he remained. His imagination yet lingered round the elegancies and refinements of the world which was now fast disappearing; he had strong and tender associations with the past; and besides that, he was a very pretty fellow,—and he *would* be *récherché* in his toilette, and elegant in his habits, say what his father might.

But more of him by and by—he will make himself better understood by his actions, than I can do by this hasty sketch. We had become warmly attached to each other. The contrast of our characters served to unite us. I do not know whether I more enjoyed the vivacity, fun, and invincible good humour, that distinguished Reginald—or he, the somewhat sentimental, tender, reserved character, of his, "best of Edmunds," as he called me. Certain it was, that we understood

each other perfectly; we were both honest and well disposed, that I will say for us; and, though we viewed many things in very different lights, in the desire for all that was good, and the admiration for all that was great, we thoroughly sympathised.

We found that Mr. Higgins had collected round him, quite a sort of little school, of young Englishmen; devoted to his opinions, and attached to his person. There were many clever young lads among them; and a great many as stupid pretenders to great things, as one might wish to see on a summer's day.

We passed the rest of our time in Paris, much to our satisfaction, exulting in the victory obtained by our opinions; revelling in the bright prospects of the future, and enjoying all the delights of the present. We most of us lived for the day—and we had our reasons. Upon matters of deeper interest, matters that come home to the business and bosom of every man, we were as much *emancipated* as upon every other.

The religion, or rather no-religion of those days, was astonishing. Since the world began, I suppose, such a complete denial of all relations, whatsoever, with a spiritual world, has not been known. Men have been Atheists in secret; and idolaters in public. Atheists that trembled at their own darkness,—and idolaters who have discerned a spirituality under their vain forms. It was reserved for the eighteenth century to look round the wondrous universe, and proclaim that there was *nothing*.

I had not attained to this climax of philosophy, and

right reason; but my mind, upon such subjects, was sadly unsettled, my thoughts were all in a maze of confusion. I neither believed, nor rejected—I tried, in fact, to think as little upon the subject as I could.

I was too much occupied, indeed, by what was going on, to be sensible of the void within my soul.

CHAPTER XII.

> Welcome pure thoughts, welcome, ye silent groves,
> These guests, these courts, my soul most dearly loves.
>
> SIR H. WOTTON.

IN July we prepared to return to England—all in great glee.

Mr. Higgins, Reginald, myself, and a number of young jacobins, disciples of Mr. Higgins, forming the party.

Mr. Higgins had given us all an invitation to visit him at Mount Sorel, immediately upon our landing, and we had accepted it without hesitation. Even I. Mount Sorel had long ceased to be to me, a place forbid.

I associated it in idea, with Mr. Higgins and Reginald, the two men I loved the best in the world; and I thought with the greatest possible pleasure of spending a few days there with the joyous party, therein about to assemble, before I proceeded to my father's.

But no sooner did I set my foot upon my native shore, than, as if by enchantment, all those feelings at once revived, which my long absence had in some degree appeared to subdue: those thousand and dear re-

membrances, hoarded in silence in my heart, on which time, absence, action, variety, had vainly exerted their power.

I had kept up a regular correspondence with Holnicote; to Mrs. de Vere or to Mrs. Fermor, I had written at stated intervals—and now and then to Mr. de Vere himself. Messages and postscripts addressed immediately to Clarice, had been answered by messages on her side; so that I had been ever present with her.

Still, nothing that passed gave the slightest satisfaction to that anxious question, which still yearned at my heart. Did she—could she—love me?

The first moment of our meeting, the first glance into her eyes, I felt persuaded would resolve this question; and my heart fluttered with that nervous anxiety, to which I had lately been a stranger, at the thoughts of seeing her again.

My old timidity, shyness, and irresolution, seemed to beset me the instant I set my foot in England. Again, the painful circumstances connected with Mount Sorel began to perplex me; the more so, that I was now become so thoroughly attached to its inhabitants, that the idea of sacrificing their friendship, even for that of Mr. de Vere, was become insupportable. I, very particularly, wished to accept Mr. Higgins' invitation, and join the gay group about to be assembled there; and Reginald, for whom my affection was indeed become very great, pressed me so earnestly to be his companion upon his first visit to his new home, that I could not resist entreaties so warmly seconded by my own inclination.

I therefore, true to my old character, halted between two measures. I knew that I should be less acceptable at Holnicote, for my intimacy at Mount Sorel; and I resolved to conceal it—not altogether *that*, neither—but to make it as little obvious as might be.

They were not, at Holnicote, aware of the time I intended to return; so I said to myself that it was a matter of indifference, and that I would pay my visit first, at Mount Sorel, whence I would proceed to my father's, and thence to Mr. de Vere's.

This may seem a strange delay and hesitation on the part of a lover, so tender as I was; but it arose, I think, from that dread of bringing things at Holnicote to an issue, which haunted me.

I don't know well how it was with me.

I had only slightly mentioned the De Veres in my communications with Reginald. Mr. de Vere had not called upon Mr. Higgins, at which Mr. Higgins, it was evident, was considerably nettled; though he scorned to mention it. With my morbid sensitiveness upon the subject, I dreaded also to have my feelings suspected; so that no one was aware of our close intimacy.

It is singular how young men thus brought together may live upon the most friendly and even confidential terms; and know little, or absolutely nothing, of each other's intimacies and connexions.

So it was, at least, in this case.

It was decided that Mr. Higgins and many of his party should immediately repair to Mount Sorel: to which place Reginald and I, after remaining about two or three days in London, were to follow them.

Reginald, as it has been seen, had never yet visited Mount Sorel; and he was not a little desirous to make himself acquainted with a place, about which he had heard so much. It was situated in a remote county, and promised to furnish less opportunity for society than he quite liked; but I assured him that he would find it, nevertheless, sufficiently to his taste.

Mr. Higgins, accordingly, and his company set off in high spirits; and Reginald and I prepared to follow in a few days. We resolved, according to the general custom of the times, to ride down on horseback; and on the day appointed we set out.

We had a very pleasant journey. Reginald was all life and gaiety, and I, in spite of my secret causes of anxiety, was enlivened by his vivacity. We laughed and chatted—and admired fine views, and speculated upon fine things.

As we entered the county to which he was henceforward to belong, Reginald was excessively interested in the scenery around him. It was, in general, picturesque, and interesting in a high degree.

At length, after threading a deep valley, we suddenly opened upon an extended landscape; and stretching far before us, we beheld that high amphitheatre of hills, which was crowned by the waving woods of Mount Sorel.

We followed a sylvan lane for a mile or two,—a sudden turn brought us to the Lodge, and we entered by the richly ornamented iron gate as I had done just three years before. Reginald was in raptures with his father's possession.

"What a beautiful! what a splendid place, Edmund!" he kept exclaiming, as the iron gates clanged behind us, and advancing into the park, the fine sheet of water, the bold outline of the woods, and the gray old peaked mansion, with its broad sweeping lawns, spread before us; all adorned by that fine and exact keeping, and order, which give so serene a dignity to a scene like this.

It was a beautiful evening—calm and still; an immense flock of rooks were returning to their evening home among the distant woods; the shrill whistle of the reed bird, sounding amid the tall sedges that ornamented one side of the lake; a flapping heron rising lazily as we approached, and winging its way slowly over the sky, the dark blue azure of which was now melting into the opal tints of evening.... Reginald, ever responsive to the impressions of the moment, felt the full influence of that calm, and beautiful hour. His gay rattle was hushed to silence; and letting the bridle hand fall, he checked his horse, and turning round, surveyed the scene without speaking....

"This is noble!—this is princely!" At last, he said,—"Edmund, he had need to prove himself a man, who owns such an inheritance as this."

"Yes, Reginald, and who, more than yourself, has the power to do so?"

He shook his head; and slowly walking our horses, we proceeded towards the house.

The mood was somewhat solemn, perhaps you will think, for the young, brilliant, volatile heir of such a property,—aged just one and twenty, and entering upon

so promising a possession. Whether natural or not,—or too solemn for the occasion,—it was soon interrupted.

We rang at the hall-door bell; but no array of footmen, with pompous butler at their head, answered in cold formality to the summons.

After waiting a few seconds, we heard some one hastily tugging at the heavy lock of the door;—open, at length, it flew, with a hideous rebound, and followed by a crowd of young men, forth rushed Mr. Higgins down the steps.

"How do!—how do! Welcome, my brave lads—that's right. Here, Reginald, my good fellow—down from your horse. Hallo!—Tom! Jack!—William!—No one to take Mr. Reginald's horse?"

Out rushed two or three rough-looking stable servants, and took possession of our steeds.

"Hallo, Edmund!—how is't with you, my good fellow? Welcome to the old place.—Come, Reginald!—come in. Thou'rt heartily, heartily, welcome to Mount Sorel, my boy."

Reginald responded to the hearty greeting; he was himself again, in a moment;—his merry eye glancing round; his ready hand returning the cheering salutes of the whole jocund party.

We were ushered into a splendid old hall; wainscoted with dark carved oak and hung with ancient suits of armour, military trophies—and the dark banners still waving, on which I could discern the golden gryphons of De Vere.

Reginald glanced round. I saw his eye kindle; and that peculiar expression cross his brow, which in mo-

ments of excitement made so remarkable a change in the character of his usually lively countenance.

We followed Mr. Higgins into a handsome dining-room; where, already, a plentiful and hospitable supper awaited us. Not, however, such a supper, as would delight any of you *gastronomes* of the present day, for Mr. Higgins detested the old Louis Quinze school of French cookery, as much as he detested Louis Quinze notions and manners in every thing. Plain English fare for him—roast and boiled, and abundance of it. Every thing, though, very capitally served in that style: for nothing was ever ill done under his administration, be the style of it what it might.

The only thing a man could not get in abundance at Mount Sorel might be wine. Not that Mr. Higgins was not as liberal of that as of other things. Holding himself excused from the least approach to such brutal indulgence himself, he freely afforded to every one of his guests, as he said, the means of being "as drunk as a hog if he liked it." But his example operated of course upon us all; and before the man who took nothing, every one felt inclined to partake sparingly of the wine that was before them.

We sat down to supper. Mr. Higgins at the head of the table; his son, as croupier, at the foot.

Every one was in the highest good humour. How we feasted! How we joked! How we laughed! How we declaimed! How we drank in our brightly flowing cups, to the destruction of all tyrants and of all tyranny—to the freedom and happiness of the universe,

when chains and fetters should clank no more; when the harsh cymbals of war and contest should be hushed; when famine should forsake the field, and vice the city, and love, liberty, and reason, regenerate the world!

There sat Mr. Higgins, joyous and animated, the very picture of vigour and energy irresistible, celebrating the natural equality of man—while we young neophytes, as devoted to him as ever were the veriest slaves to the veriest autocrat, rejoiced in our emancipation and our freedom.

Reginald alone was perhaps less gay that one night, than usual. He might be tired with his day's journey, for his build was not Herculean like his father's; he might be for once overpowered by the noise around him.... certainly the excessive elegance of his appearance, formed a strange contrast with the philosophic contempt for manners polite professed by his father, and the most part of his followers. It is probable that this his first entrance into his new home, gave rise to many reflections.

Once or twice I saw his eye glance round the room; where, empanelled in the wall, hung the noble portraits of the De Veres, arrayed in all the dignified simplicity of the middle ages; with their armour on, their glittering scarfs, their trusty swords by their sides.

I saw him glance at these portraits and then at the figures round the table, and as my eye followed his, though my heart rejoiced at the new order of things now rapidly approaching, my imagination would whisper, as I contrasted the present before us and the past around us—that *all* would not be pure gain.

Reginald's preoccupation was at last perceived by his father,—who, pausing amidst the torrent of declamation, sarcasm, invective, reasoning wrong or right, assertions true or false, that poured from his lips,—looked down the table at his son, no longer the most brilliant and gay of the assembly, and exclaimed,

"Hey day, my lad! what's the matter, now? You look as if you were just come out of the cave of Trophonius."

Reginald laughed.

To be wearied in body, or to give way to that tenderness of thought which we have agreed to call the sentimental, were either of them, weaknesses, which no one dared to confess before Mr. Higgins. He had no conception of the one, and the supremest contempt for the other.

So, Reginald roused himself; shook off the train of thought that was stealing over him; and his bright blue eye flashing as it was wont, his end of the table was soon echoing with laughter.

CHAPTER XIII.

The wind blows out, the bubble dies,
The spring entombed in autumn lies:
The dew dries up, the star is shot,
The flight is past, and Man forgot.

KING.

THE next morning I did not waken until late.

I was never strong, stout as was my appearance; I was too often the victim of that mysterious lassitude and langour of body or mind, which damps and enfeebles the purposes, and is the source of so much miserable hesitation, irresolution, and inconsistency of action.

I was more than usually a prey to these uncomfortable feelings at this moment; for my mind, ever since I had entered the house, had been a prey to uneasy reflections.

I looked round, and the grave figures upon the wall seemed to reproach me, as I contrasted them with the noisy company assembled round the table—and compared the joyous and somewhat rude negligence of the present possessor, with the melancholy dignity of him whom he had supplanted.

Occupied with these, and with thoughts still more agitating which haunted my restless pillow, I had rested ill; and it was, as I said, very late before I left my bed-room. When I entered the breakfast room, breakfast had long been over, and every one was gone out.

The deserted table strewed with newspapers, and covered with littered plates, half filled tea cups, frozen toast and broken egg-shells, was what received my melancholy self.

The breakfast room was another specimen of those relics of the past, so precious to an imagination such as mine, and with which the house was filled. It was not a large room, and it was perfectly square—in which taste of our ancestors I cannot coincide. The whole room was panelled with beautifully carved oak, richly ornamented with gilding; noble doors with lofty architraves, on three sides of the apartment; on the other a large open chimney, now filled with an immense bouquet of summer greens and holyoak flowers, and surmounted by a chimney-piece, which, with its beautiful Gothic carvings, its niches, ogives, and small statues of saints, might have served for the screen of a small Catholic chapel. The ceiling was covered with a profusion of trailing vines, bunches of grapes, and twisting roses in bold relief; and the curtains of a heavy damask of deep green, with a plain and massive cornice harmonised perfectly with the fine old fashioned chairs and settees. The windows were very lofty, but casemented and with small oval panes, and those heavy stone window frames that are so singularly rich in their effect. These casements were open at this moment. Roses and jessamine in profusion were trailing and flaunting

round them, and a small border which separated the house at this side from the bowling-green, was filled with marigolds, sweet peas, and such sort of flowers.

As in the dining room, so in this breakfast room, portraits were panelled into the wall—portraits of the female members of the ancient family.

I had soon finished my cold breakfast; and, having glanced over the newspapers, filled with news from Paris, and those debates in parliament which now began to assume so deep an interest... I threw them down; and, the servants coming in to clear away, I rose from my chair, and with my hands in my coat-pockets, walked round and began to examine the pictures.

I was endeavouring, in the delicate, elegant, though somewhat formal features, of these, the once adored of their steel-clad relations of the dining-room, to trace some of those features, so deeply impressed upon my heart. After some time thus employed, I sauntered to the window, and looking out, saw Reginald crossing the bowling-green.

Reginald had risen with the lark, full of spirits, the portion of health, youth, and innocence. Happy in the enjoyment which visits him, who, slave to no selfish calculations, victim to no debasing vices, would fain gladden the universe with the overflowings of his own content.

He rose this morning, as I said, with the lark, and whistling, opened the window of his room, and looked out upon the scene beyond. Before him spread the velvet lawn, peopled with troops of grazing deer; below

him the wide extended lake glittering in the beams of the rising sun, as its tiny waves skimmed and broke upon the shore. The woods not yet illuminated by the spreading light, hung in a dark circle round; the whole scene softened by the dewy mists of morning. The steep precipices of the red hill, and the peaked arch of the Gothic window, were seen above the trees, as the light fell from the opposite horizon full upon them.

He was soon dressed and soon out; wandering among the leafy labyrinths, which surrounded him.

He had passed through the vast gloomy hall, as he went out; and again, the sight of those vestiges of heroic times—the massive suits of mail, the trophies of arms, and the dark waving banners—had arrested his attention.

"What race was this? Who were these that preceded my father here? And how come he, here—and I, here—amid the ruins of a past, with which we have neither of us any thing to do? Where are they, the once proud inhabitants of this old house? —Have they vanished from the face of the earth?—Have they departed like so many of the most ancient families of England? Are they too gone; to clear the ground, as it were, for all these new things of which we hear so much?"

He was full of these thoughts as he walked along, and, musing upon the scene before him, passed through paths, now cleared into a sort of wild order, and at length arrived at a point, where the over-hanging branches suddenly opening, the fine tracery of the beau-

tiful Gothic window rose before him, crowning the face of the red precipitous rock.

He determined to ascend to it, and followed the windings of the path he had chosen, which, now hidden by the heavy dew-bespangled branches, now commanding the rich and extensive landscape, at last ascended to the platform on which the ancient castle of Mount Sorel had stood. He made his way through the crumbling ruins, till he reached the chapel, and entering stood transfixed with surprise, and admiration at the scene. The eastern sun, now gleaming upon the interior of the window, dressed up all its rich tracery in brilliant light; gilding the magnificent tombs and decaying monuments that covered the floor; and casting a warm glow upon the garlands of twisted plants and pendant ivy, which springing from every crevice waved and sported in the fresh wooing air.

Unencumbered with foul weeds, cleared from all the decaying obstruction with which long neglect had defiled it, the beautiful chapel was now displayed. The ground was no longer embarrassed with a wilderness of nettles, thistles, docks, and briars—and the various carved tombs, the brass imprinted plates, and the dark reposing figures, were richly scattered around. The dead lay sleeping there silent and forgotten—the brave—the wise—the beautiful among men—a mouldering mass of dust and ashes, there they lay; lonely in the place of their graves.

The imagination of the young man, so easily excited by every thing that was tender or sublime, was struck

by this still and tranquil scene. Long time he gazed, in a sort of enchanted surprise and wonder;—then, walking in, and treading softly, as in some deeply hallowed place, he began to examine the tombs.

They were in general much defaced; and the inscriptions in that ancient character, which Reginald was far from being archæologist enough to decipher.

But in some places the inscriptions seemed to have been renewed in more modern times; and upon the richly carved, and highly ornamented tomb of the crusader, lying there in his chain armour, with his small triangular shield upon his arm, and short sword by his side, as I have before described him,—though the ancient inscription which ran round the capital of the tomb was not to be deciphered, Reginald read, upon one of the panels at the sides, in characters as late as those of King James's days, these words:

HIC JACET
CORPVS EQVITIS FORTISSIMI ATQVE CLARISSIMI
RANVLPHI DE VERE.
REQVIESCENS IN SACRA TERRA QVAM CVM
CORPORE E PALÆSTINA IN PATRIAM DEPORTAVIT
ARMIGER FIDELIS
ET DOMINO LABORIBVS DEFUNCTO SANCTVM
STRAVIT LECTVM.

"Here lies the most brave and noble knight, Ranulph de Vere; reposing on sacred earth, which, with his body,

his faithful squire brought over from Palestine, that he might here make a sacred bed for his dead lord."

De Vere! That, was then the name.

On the tomb of the cardinal, on other broken and half-defaced monuments around, on the brasses beneath his feet, the same name might be seen repeated; while the salient gryphon upon the shield, was the same as upon the banners in the hall.

As Reginald walked about this chapel, examining the ruins and pondering on the past; anxiously endeavouring to discover some indications more distinct, which might illustrate the history of the evidently distinguished race which had preceded him; he thought he heard the noise of a broom, as of some one very deliberately employed in sweeping at no great distance. And returning to the entrance, he spied a very old, grey-headed man, of the smallest possible dimensions, and almost bent double with age, who was very slowly sweeping the path which led away from the the ruins.

"*Voila mon fait, du moins*," quoth Reginald to himself, and he went up to the old man.

"Good morning to you, my good fellow!" said he, cheerily accosting him, "you are early at your work to-day."

"Bless your pleasant voice!" said the old man, lifting up his head, and fixing his grey, bleared eyes upon Reginald's face: "A good morning to you, my brave young gentleman. Yes, yes—I *am* early. Master Higgins does na' stomach slug-a-beds."

"But its rather soon, for you, my old father, to be out of yours. I'm sure Mr. Higgins will be indulgent to one of your years, and give you an hour's law or so."

"Na, na," said the old man, "that's what he wonna do—not he—no law for nc'er a one. Not that I mean to say, as how, Higgins is a bad master—na, na—he's a bit o' a stiff un, but he's a just un—and that's much, now-a-days; better than 'twert ith day, afore un."

"Did you serve in the family, then, from whom Mr. Higgins bought this property?"

"Ay, ay, did I, Sir—boy and man, these fourscore years."

"And what sort of people were they?"

"Why, as rascally a devil's crew, one and all, on 'em —as ever came into this country."

"Indeed!" cried Reginald, a good deal disappointed. "Why, when did they come into this country? They had been settled here for ages, surely?"

"I don't know for ages—but this, I know—when I war a little unbreeched boy, them ones, came here first; —ill luck to the county when they *did* come. The father had made a power o' money in the South Sea scheme, as they ca'd it, and he bought Mount Sorel from the last of them old starched Independents—or rather from his executors, as I ha' heard say—for the old man died here, and I can ajust remember him."

"Then, it was from these South Sea people, that my father bought the estate?"

"Ay, ay, Sir, them Entwistles—Sorrow be with 'em, wherever they be! They were a sore scourge o' this country."

"Then those, who preceded them" .....said Reginald.

"Anan, Sir!" said the old man.

"Those from whom the Entwistles bought the estate —the old Puritan family, you spoke of. What was their name?"

"Canna justly call to mind," said he, resting on the handle of his broom. "Canna recall it, Sir. Should know it if I heard it named."

"Was it De Verus—De Vere—or something like that?"

"Na, na, na—not that neither. That's the name of the real old ancient folk. Na, na, na, 'twant De Vere, for certain. Stay, stay, 'twas Oliphant. Ay, ay—now I ha' it—Oliphant. Na, na—De Vere—that's the name o'th' old stock of all."

"Then the De Veres have been extinct for many years?" pursued Reginald.

"I reckon so," replied the old man, evidently not altogether understanding him.

"And when did the Oliphants come into possession?"

"Oh Law, Sir!—before I can remember. My great grandfather—a pretty long time, Sir, sin' that un wore petticoats"—with a little laugh—"he used to speak, as I ha' hard tell—to him, as was my grandfather; as how *his* father used tell of the great De Vere and Oliphant Cause. Afore King William's days it war, Sir, and how the De Vere lost it. And how all the country round put on mourning—that's to say, all the true old church and king families, Sir. And how,

the Lady de Vere put on her widow's weeds—her husband being alive all th' time—and said, as how, being widowed of half his estate, she would mourn for him as for one dead. Ah, Sir! that war a grand family in the old times—as I ha' hard say. Never a De Vere sat down to dine, but one hundred stout men-at-arms sat down to feed at his cost, that day. Never a De Vere raised banner on high—but fifty mounted and mailed rode forth to follow it. Ay, Sir, that *war* a family! All the sons were brave, and all the daughters virtuous—that was the saying *then*. But it's a long, long, weary time ago; and it ha' been the talk from father to son sin' then, wi' those born and bred on this estate .... but, belike, it won't be th' talk much longer. They seem as how they were getting other guess things in their heads, the young uns o'this day. No un minds o'the De Veres, or such like now. It's a stupid nonsens—them old things, they'll be a telling you."

"And so, the family of the De Veres is swept from the face of the earth?" said Reginald.

"Anan, Sir!" again repeated the old man.

"I say," said Reginald, "that not one De Vere is left?"

"Law, Sir, what be ye a thinking of! There's the De Veres of Holnicote, lies just o'er this very hill, Sir! Don't you know the De Veres of Holnicote?"

"I am a stranger in these parts," was Reginald's reply.

"Mr. De Vere o' Holnicote there.—Ay, Sir, he's a proud man that. He's as haught as any De Vere

o' them all. I wonder he didn't buy this same, when 'twas i' th' market."

"Perhaps he had ceased to care, or think about it."

"Not he, Sir! Not he! Many's the time, and many, when I ha' been creeping about here;—for old Grey down there who kept th' house for the creditors like, war a kind ould body, and he'd gie me a job, now and then he would; many's the time, and many, I ha' seen that same, come down this 'ere path as I am a sweeping—sure it war a wild bit of a path then... no path at all as I may say... and I ha watched him to go in that same chapel—and he'd be there by the hour, Sir—and he'd wander about this place like as a ghost or a spiret, Sir,—but he ne'er liked any un to see him—and few did... We thought he was about to buy the place; but a' didn't. May be he was too poor—for it must a cost a power o' money."

Reginald made no observation upon this, and the old man went on.

"Sir! this estate you see, they lost it, as I ha' heard tell in Crumwell's time—and then y' that Charles' time; there was the great Oliphant cause. They tried hard to get it back again; but some how or other those same Oliphants had the longest purse, you see. And so, the De Veres spent a power o' gold—good money after bad as it proved to be—and they lost their cause: and they ha' been a sunk family ever sin'. But they are as proud as the Pope for a' that still, as some say—but I dinna know... There *is* a pride—and there *is* a pride:—and the pride of a dark, mournful man, like that Mr. de Vere, does na misbecome him, to my mind, like."

"And has he any family, this Mr. de Vere?" said Reginald.

"Ah, Sir! that war a sore point. Years, and years, did that man pray—ay they say," looking mysterious, "blaspheme for a son—but no son came.... But he ha' a daughter."—

"A daughter! And what is she?"

"Oh poor thing! they say, as how, she's the beautifullst angel that ever was seen on the face o' the earth.—But old De Vere keeps her up there at Holnicote, and wont let any one so much as look at her."

"Beautiful!"

"Ay, Sir—them, as ha' seen her says, as how she's like th' sleeping beauty in the wood—or morning star—whose eyes was so bright they blinded man to look—with lips as red as cherries—and skin like minever, Sir. But she's mewed up there; for old De Vere seems to be grown melancholy, like, thes'n two year back. He used for to visit, across the country; and there'd be grand dinnering among all they great folk; but now, there's no more grand dinners at Holnicote. Th' ould servants are moped to death; and Old John the coachman tould me t' other day—'I don't see the use of keeping them four greys,' says he, 'a washed and a soap-sudded, like my young ladies white hands, if they ne'er be seen except i'the lanes,' says he."

"And how does the young lady like this?"

"I know na. Some say one thing, some another. Some say as how she pines a little like....It aint nat'ral, for them young things, to be shut up a' this 'ns without sprig or sprin to make their congees, like,

afore 'em. It ain't nat'ral.... Some say she's pleased, so as her parents pleased. She's a good, gentle, gracious child; that, one and all o' them say.... But there's the bell a' calling on us to breakfast, Sir; and Master Jones there, the steward, won't take excuses. Higgins don't like 'em. He gives us old folks breakfast, you see, if as how we come for it 'o the minnit like, you know. So, good day to ye, Sir."

"Good day," said Reginald, giving him money; and leaving his grateful and garrulous new acquaintance to lay aside his broom and descend to the offices, he pursued his walk.

The parlour breakfast-bell summoned him no very long time after; and there he found his father and his merry men all, fresh from their various early rambles. They were busy devouring the good things before them; and, with almost equal alacrity and impatience, tearing open newspapers and unsealing letters.

Mr. Higgins was holding a newspaper at arms length, reading in a loud triumphant voice, the speech of one of the orators of his own party; reported in the newspaper of his own side, to the best advantage, of course; a speech of mighty colossal eloquence,—as I have heard the debates of those days characterised by one, who called them "days of the giants."

Of his train, some were eating, a few whispering, some, knife and fork arrested in either hand on the table, attentively listening as he read.

"Where hast thou been? youth of my heart!" cried his father, in high goodhumour, lifting his head from the newspaper as Reginald opened the door. "Come forward,

my Alcibiades—he of the ambrosial curling locks—and hear what a dressing we gave that d—d scoundrel of a minister on Wednesday."

And elevating his voice still higher, and recommencing the harangue from the beginning; he poured forth in rich, stentorian tones, the eloquent harangue of the mighty orator.

"There's for you, Reginald! There's what I call a *man!* That's what *I* call a statesman. That's what *I* call a monarch. That's what I call royal, glorious, godlike, divine. Thus to stand forth, and with this little member—this power of the small, yet mighty tongue—to stem the mad career of tyrants! arrest the ragings of oppression! conjure the thunders of war! and assert the undeniable, the imperishable, the unprescriptable rights of man! What can a base venal minister, the tool of an insolent, ignorant, paltry German bred puppet—what can he—clever man as he unquestionably is, I admit that—what can he oppose to the mighty voice? ... to the irresistible, the unassailable power of reason and truth?" And he flung the paper to his son.

Reginald took it and was soon lost in the debate, while Mr. Higgins was partly occupied between the breakfast which he devoured with the most ravenous vividity, and the papers which he hurried over.... Now making loud exclamations of joy—now uttering the bitterest denunciations, as events and sentiments of varying character passed under his review.

Reginald, absorbed in the vast interests of the hour, found the image of the past, as represented in the

memory of the De Veres, fading from his mind—it could not compete with the more bright and urgent impressions of the present. Active life dispels these phantoms of the soul, these fond reveries of the imagination; they haunt the secluded and the solitary, as the ghost or spirit lingers still in the remote and silent wilderness; but they rarely visit the habitations of busy, stirring, every-day men.

The impression, however, upon Reginald's imagination, though it diminished in intensity, was not altogether dispelled by the beams of the mid-day sun.

He came, as I said, to the window I had strolled through, and we walked some time up and down the bowling-green together.

Reginald asked me, whether I had read the last night's debate.

"No," I said, "I had not."

"Why, what hast thou been doing with thy most deeply reflecting and solitary self, man?" said he. "Thou wert not at breakfast—wert thou like, myself, wandering about lost in foolish fancies?"

"No, I have not been out—I have been looking at the old portraits in the breakfast-room."

"An interesting speculation, most peaceful of Jacobins! But what hath the study of those ancient minions and mistresses of wicked tyrants and feudal despots, to do with thee, man of the people?"

"They have a particular interest for me, Reginald—because you know I am acquainted with the family, to which they once belonged."

"Ay! by-the-by, Edmund," said he, as if struck by a sudden recollection; "I have heard you speak of the De Veres, I think. Don't you know them?"

"Yes—I have known them ever since I was a boy," said I slightly.

I disliked to enter upon the subject with any one, most especially with him; I was remarkably sensitive on the score of my relations with Holnicote and at Mount Sorel; for reasons too well known, I hated to think of them or hear them mentioned. As for Clarice, I had concealed my feelings upon that subject, with the utmost care; goodnatured as Reginald was, I dreaded his raillery above all things.

Every one is thoughtless and unmerciful upon love matters; and without I made a full confidence and led him to understand the whole depth and force of my attachment—a confidence my soul revolted from making—how was it likely he would spare me; and how should I escape from being eternally harassed by the light artillery of his ever ready wit.

This secret consciousness had prevented me from even mentioning the De Veres, when I could help it. Reginald, therefore, had not the least reason to suspect the close intimacy which had subsisted between my father and Mr. de Vere. And I had been able, without the smallest difficulty, to preserve the precious secret of my hoarded love.

"Well, thou art a deep and still water, Edmund—but, *par parenthese*, we will say... that truth and the honestest heart in the three kingdoms, lie at the bottom

of the well. But it's very odd that you never talked to me about these De Veres."

"Why should I, Reginald? What could you care about the De Veres?"

"Why, not much," said he, carelessly; "but I wonder you have been now ten days in England, and have never given them notice of your arrival."

"How do you know that? However, it is true I have not; and I am afraid Mr. de Vere will think it very negligent on my part, when he hears it; however, I shall go to him from my father's."

Reginald looked sharply at me.

"Art thou not very impatient now, to go to thy father's?"

"No," said I, "why should I? I parted from my father only a few days ago in London, you know—why should I be so very impatient to see him again?"

"Oh! I don't know in the least," said Reginald, again looking wicked.

"What do you mean, Reginald?"

"I mean—when *do* you go to Holnicote?"

"I don't really know," said I, peevishly; "there is no particular hurry about it."

"So, it seems—my dearest, most beloved, most apathetic of all young anchorites," said Reginald.

And catching hold of a leaping pole which lay near, he began to make the most extraordinary and incredible displays of activity and force; while I, seized with emulation, something like the poor ass in the fable—a part, I too often was fated to play—began jumping in a

manner which made Reginald scream, hold his sides, and roll upon the grass with laughter.

He said, from that time, no more to me upon the subject of the De Veres; and appeared, indeed, to have entirely forgotten it.

CHAPTER XIV.

Wohl ist sie schön die Welt! In ihrer Weite
Bewegt sich so viel Gutes hin und her.
Ach, dass es immer nur um einen Schritt
Von uns sich zu entfernen scheint,
Und unsre bange Sehnsucht durch das Leben
Auch Schritt vor Schritt bis nach dem Grabe lockt!
So selten ist es dass die Menschen finden,
Was ihnen doch bestimmt gewesen schien.

TORQUATO TASSO.

IT was Sunday morning, a very fine one, and gave promise of a thoroughly hot day. We were assembled at breakfast; and, as if inspired with the gladness of all around us, every one, but my quiet self, was in the highest spirits. Reginald was perfectly wild. His fantastical imaginations; his lively sallies; his wit, his fun, his nonsense; were inexhaustible. His very father, who seldom listened to any one but himself; even he listened, —and laughed aloud.

His father's laugh acted as an additional incentive to the spirits of Reginald; he was more inimitable than ever.

I see him now,—the elegant, exactly-dressed crea-

ture, thrown negligently back upon his chair,—those laughing eyes, that winning mouth, the gay carelessness with which he laughed merrily with all the rest at his own jokes,—for he was far too natural and genuine to affect a gravity he did not feel, in order to enhance the effect of what he said.

All were talking and laughing at once, when Mr. Higgins' loud voice was heard among the *mêlée*.

"Hallo, my boys! it's getting late—what's the order of the day? Where are we all bound for?"

We stopped talking at this, and there was a little silence of expectation. Mr. Higgins, in general, proposed his own plans, and those acceded to them who chose—usually, the greater part of us.

"Well, my boys, what will you all do?"

"Have you no plan, Sir?" said one.

"What's yours? What's yours?"

Various plans for passing away the summer morning were proposed, debated, and rejected; at last, they turned to Reginald, and there was a general cry of—

"What are you going to do? What are you for, Reginald?"

"Go where you all please. Do what you all like. I am for church," cried he.

"For church!" was the general exclamation.

It was not the fashion, in those days, for any of the new school to go to church. We all held that as a mere act of obedience to an empty superstition. We despised every form of public worship, as the useless relics of a by-gone age—the exploded usages of society in

its infancy; equally derogatory from the Being to whom they were addressed, and from the lofty supremacy of human reason. So they all stared, and no one seconded the proposal.

"I am glad, my most excellent son, to see thee so piously inclined," said Mr. Higgins, with a sneer; "I commend thee to thy devotions. For me—I am for a good long summer-day's walk this most beautiful morning. I have long aspired to the summit of Pen Vammah there—and I invite those whose aspirations are after the grand magnificence of nature to follow me."

We all assented; but Reginald pinched me by the elbow.

"No, Edmund," he said, "you must come with me."

"But I am going with Mr. Higgins," I rejoined.

"You are not going with Mr. Any-such-thing, Edmund,—you are going with me!"

"And why?"

"Because you are the most good-natured fellow in the whole world, and you'll come with me—do, Edmund, now."

He knew, by experience, that I could refuse him nothing; I yielded as usual.

"Why, heigh day! Edmund," said Mr. Higgins, "are you of the pious? Well, be it as seemeth unto you good. What church are you going to honour, my chaps, with your most devout presence?"

"Oh! the parish church below, I conclude," said I.

"Make my compliments to the old fellow, then, Reginald, and try and persuade him to come up to

dinner; though the poor old pedant will scarcely dare trust himself, I doubt, with such an impious crew."

And, so saying, Mr. Higgins took his hat and stick and, followed by his merry party of youngsters, away he went.

When they were gone—

"I'm not going to the parish church, Edmund," said Reginald. "I happen to-day to have no particular desire to hear this Mr. Jones."

"Where are you going then?"

"Oh! you didn't know, perhaps, sagest, gravest, most discreet and silent of all possible Edmunds, that within the dark enclosure of these woods there lieth enshrined a divinity of no mortal mould! A goddess! A cynosure of eyes! An enchanted beauty of the woods! Enthralled within a magic circle, where no curious eye may peep!"

"What can you be raving of?" said I, a little alarmed. I was always on the watch for Reginald. I knew the gaiety of his temper, and the vividness of his imagination; it had been a matter of surprise, as much as of satisfaction to me, to perceive that he had passed unscathed through the many temptations of the foreign worlds we had visited. I now feared temptation under another form; under that of one of those rural beauties, so dangerous to idle young men in the country; one whom, in spite of our new principles, neither I, as his friend, nor Mr. Higgins, as his father, would quite relish seeing him united to.

"Oh! some gamekeeper's daughter?" said I, contemptuously.

"Viva!" cried Reginald. "My man of equality—my most consistent of reasoners—my most philosophic of Edmunds! And why, I pray you, child of reason," he went on, "why may not a gamekeeper's daughter as you please to style her, gifted with all the graces of Venus and more than all the virtues of Diana, be, at the least, as good as a poor golden calf like me?"

"Dear Reginald! What nonsense it does please you to talk. Don't be foolish," said I, peevishly.

"Why, what," he continued, "what would you have? Is not my father preaching equality—rights of man, and rights of women, from morning till night? Are we not carefully instructed that the first and indefeasible right of man, is to please himself; and the first and indefeasible right of woman, to fall in love, when, how, where, and with whom, she can? Is it not instilled into our infant minds, as mother's milk, that honour and praise from no condition rise? Nay—that true virtue, pure reason, generous sentiments, and the brightness of truth—all that which constitutes the sterling nobility of our nature—are we not instructed to seek them, not amid the vain sophistications of an artificial and perverted system, not in that life which man has till now been content to consider polished, but among the children of nature!—the free, untaught, uncorrupted denizens of the plains! Among the glorious sovereign people! Doth he not every day teach, that the swinish multitude of Mr. Burke—by a reversal, as it were, of the cup of Circe—are suddenly become the only lords of reason, lords of themselves and all the world besides? And, there-

fore, most profound of logicians, is it not clear as light that the daughters of these supreme masterpieces of creation—shall be of the fairest and the most precious among the daughters of men?"

"They may be very fair, and very precious, for any thing that I know, Reginald; but I must say, that it provokes me, beyond measure, to see you perverting every thing that is admirable in your father's principles, in this absurd and ridiculous manner."

"Perverting! Most just, and candid, of all impossible philosophers. Perverting!—I merely humbly endeavour to carry out maxims so incontrovertibly true. I am no reasoner, thank Heaven!—I am a plain man of action. My father has pretty nearly destroyed my faith in every thing else; let me, prithee, retain my faith in him! Let me practise what he preaches, at least, as the pious son of so incontestibly infallible a father, ought best to do."

"How intolerable you are, Reginald!" said I, quite provoked, for I thought I knew what was coming. "You know your father is a sensible man. To vice, I am sure you will never descend—and a marriage of the sort you allude to, would be excessively displeasing to him."

"You think so, my grave and most sophistical Mentor—I am very positive, sure, and certain, as I ought to be—that my father is neither a pretender, a hypocrite, nor a fool. Neither do I believe him to have quite such loose notions upon the propriety of governing our actions by well ascertained principles, as you, friend of my heart, in your reverence, would attribute to him.

But smooth that anxious brow of thine—*de mariage pas un mót.* What are you about, putting such extravagant romances into prudent young men's heads. I merely wished to see, that I might worthily worship a certain sylvan divinity whom I have discovered abiding in these parts—and, lo! your idle fancy runs upon marriage!"

But, seeing me look really uneasy.

"Pooh, pooh! Edmund," said he, with his usual gay good humour. "Don't vex your goodnatured heart, man. You would be sorry to see your Reginald make a fool of himself, would you? Dear Edmund!" looking affectionately in my face, "you *are* such a good-hearted fellow. I could almost find in my heart to play the part of a reasonable being, if it were merely to please you."

"So, you are not going to church, then."

"Pardon me, but I am going—only, not to hear old Jones. Besides, Edmund, I like to go to church; my good mother taught me a few things I have not quite forgotten yet—I'm not so clever as the rest of ye.... But I'm going, you must know, to a particular church for a particular reason, so get your hat and come away, for it grows late."

During our walk Reginald was in the wildest spirits; springing over every rail and gate we had to pass; skirmishing with every old cow; decapitating every towering thistle; laughing, bantering, joking, all the while: seeming to find it impossible, by any means, to exhaust his exuberant activity of body and mind.

The path he took began to alarm and surprise me.

"Why, which way are you going?" I exclaimed.

"Over moss, over moor—thorough bog, thorough briar, hurry-skurry—quoth the broomstick, as it answered the witch. Why you dear, lubberly, awkward, heavy Edmund, will you never get along? Don't you hear the sweet bells ringing? Come away, come away, this is Nature's holiday."

Such was his wild extravagant nonsense, as he hurried me forward—till all on a sudden we came in view of the neat little village church: that to which the De Veres went.

It stood in its little rural churchyard; one of those small, square-towered, ivy-shrouded, antique buildings, which are the charm of rural England; the churchyard filled with the small green mounds, and mouldering grave-stones of the little secluded world to which it belonged, and shaded by a row of majestic elms on one side, and by the orchard and trees of the venerable old parsonage-house upon the other.

The sky was of the clearest blue—the lovely pale English blue—with one or two snow-white fleecy clouds gently floating in the vast expanse: the little birds were twittering—the bell sounding at intervals, summoning to church the parishioners, who came flocking in from all sides.

The women, decently dressed in their black bonnets, quilted black petticoats, and black and scarlet open chintz gowns, leading their quaintly attired children along; teaching each curly-headed, clean-faced little boy, in his corduroy shorts, and white stockings, to bob a bow—and every neat, modest-looking, little girl with downcast eyes, to

drop a curtsey—when those passed whom they were accustomed, in those primitive days, to call their betters. While the husbands, hale and simple, handsomely dressed, but strictly according to their condition, represented the plain primitive old English character, as it then existed, but as, I fear, it exists no longer.

These came trooping on, in mingled groups of various colours, trudging cheerily along, and winding up the little pathway which led to the church.

The bell had not yet ceased to ring; it never did until Mr. de Vere's carriage arrived.

How shall I describe my feelings? With what gushing tenderness did I once more regard this peaceful picture, after all the exciting scenes through which I had so lately passed! I felt my eyes moisten at this pure representation of the antique life; as yet undisturbed by the fierce turmoil that was raging round.

Then, that angel!—the angel of this secluded spot! She, whom I had so often seen mingling among these groups, but shining forth amid the rest, "as does a lily among thorns, for so was my love among the daughters." The remembrance was too much for me.

A considerable degree of distress and perplexity mingled also with my other feelings. For the reasons I have mentioned, I had forborne as yet to announce my arrival in England to these beloved friends; but now, the sort of nervous weakness which had determined me not to introduce myself at Holnicote until my visit at Mount Sorel should be over, appeared to me as the most contemptible imbecility.

What could have bewitched me? What would they

—what could they think when they stumbled upon me first by accident, as it were ? and with Reginald!

Then Clarice!—that first meeting with Clarice!....

That sacred meeting, which had occupied my days and filled my nights with such various anticipations of tenderness or terror, which I had taught myself to look upon as the decisive moment of my fate—the test by which I was at once to measure the nature of her sentiments towards me! All that was to ensue from that meeting so fondly desired and yet so intensely dreaded!

And thus suddenly to be hurried into it, and in the presence of Reginald too, whose quick eye was certain to observe my emotion, and to penetrate my secret; that secret, which I had so carefully shrouded from him.

I could not do it—I turned round resolved to escape before it was yet too late.... Then recollecting what a strange appearance my behaviour must have in Reginald's eyes, I paused—hesitated. And while I hesitated I heard the roll of a carriage rapidly approaching, and at the next moment Mr. de Vere's coach passed quickly down the lane, which bounded the church yard on the side where we were standing.

I saw a face rapidly presented at the open window, and as rapidly withdrawn. It was hers....

I saw that beaming face—I heard her exclaim "Edmund!"

And turning to a lady within the carriage, she began talking with the greatest animation.

She had seen me, she had certainly seen me; it was too late; retreat was now impossible; I must meet them

all when church was over, and account as best I could for my behaviour.

But what should I say? How explain things? How indeed! in the hurried meeting within that little porch, under the intense emotion which already made my heart beat till I could hardly breathe.

With what words shall I address her? What shall I find to say?

The elegant carriage stopped; the two tall powdered footmen in cocked hats, white and crimson liveries, and with cane in hand, flung down the steps.

Mr. de Vere got out first.

He looked thinner I thought than when we had last met. But I could not very well see his face, for he turned round and handed out his wife, who moved slowly towards the church in her usual composed manner.

Then came Clarice.

Inexpressibly lovely she looked, her light figure contrasted with the short and decrepid one of Mrs. Fermor, to whom she offered her arm.

They all entered the church and we followed.

It was a little, dark, lowly church, filled with old ricketty oaken pews, and with a plain humble oaken pulpit and communion table. There was not an ornament throughout the whole building: a few tablets, and a few of those heraldic representations called achievements, belonging to the family of the De Veres, had accumulated in the place, since the more ancient burying ground of their family had been alienated.

Their pew, covered by a sort of canopy of carved oak,

supported on carved pillars of the same material, stood close by the pulpit.

Reginald leaving me to my own agitating reflections, pushed his way into the church, and going straight up the centre aisle, opened the door of a pew just opposite to that of the De Veres, and commanding a view of it.

There was an old farmer and his wife within.

Reginald, with a very polite air, seemed to demand permission to enter; it was granted with that appearance of pleasure, with which the old are so often filled when an opportunity occurs for obliging youth.

That youth, which they both love and fear—that youth, which is to them, as a heavenly vision—but which the discouragement which waits upon old age, makes them too often regard with a certain apprehension. How sweet it is to them, when, courteous and reverencing amid all its gay exuberance of power, those delightful beings assume that gracious manner and behaviour which so well becomes them, and so well becomes the relations of their mutual years.

Respect for age was a virtue of the antique world—the reverse is, I am sorry to say, one of my causes of quarrel with the highly progressed generation of to-day.

Reginald, as I have said, who was with all his vivacity one of the most polite and considerate of human beings, having, in two seconds, captivated with his winning smiles and congées the hearts of these two good old people—stood, holding the pew-door open; I signed to him to go in first; I wanted to be as near as possible to that magnet to which my heart so turned and trembled. But he insisted, and I was forced to pass him.

He sat down at the extremity of the pew, and I by his side, little indeed noticing either his presence or behaviour.

I was entirely absorbed in my own thoughts and feelings. What might the next few minutes produce? Alas! How little could I divine!

My loved! My loveliest! My dearest! Treasure of my heart! Secret idol within a shrine never desecrated by other object! Sweetest and best!—It was then given to me to behold thee again! More lovely far than ever I thought thee, as my wandering eye glanced that way—irresistibly fascinated to that spot where so often I had knelt and prayed at thy side; prayed with thee—prayed for thee—invoked all the choicest blessings of Heaven upon that sweet and innocent head!

She was grown taller, and the girlish, almost childish, loveliness of her face and figure had changed into something of a stronger and more marked character. She was, strictly speaking, perhaps not so beautiful—she had lost something of the rosy glow redolent of youth, health, and gaiety—and she was thinner; her form had lost something of its beautiful roundness; her features, too, were in the slightest degree attenuated, and her cheek was pale; a certain slight shade of sadness in her eyes had darkened, but at the same time, had deepened, their expression.

As she knelt, and those eyelids fell, and the dark eyelashes lay upon her cheek, there was an expression of feeling in her brow.... that touching expression which I so well remembered,—a slight tinge of melancholy,

which I had often seen settle there for others—never for herself—to me, so inexpressibly interesting. I saw plainly that all the world would say, that she had, in some degree, fallen short of her early promise of beauty; but to me she had far exceeded it.

Thus, was she a million times more precious to my doting heart, than in all the triumphs of her opening charms.

I divined that the years of my absence had not been entirely happy; and my heart smote me as I looked at the group, and traced with sorrow upon their faces, the ravages of disappointment and time.

Mr. de Vere was grown, as I had before remarked, thinner. And now that I could see his countenance, I could clearly discern the traces of that internal struggle which he had so long maintained with himself.

His fine high features had assumed a certain hardness —a certain fixity, of expression—if I may so call it. So rigidly had he forbade them to express the feelings that were for ever working within. They carried a sort of habitual but artificial calmness which struck me as unnatural—as no true reflection of the inner being. One could fancy that under that placid seeming, the hidden waves of passion might be surging and boiling.

Mrs. de Vere looked old; her countenance sunk and pale; the gentle and passive expression of her face, however, unchanged; but she had more of *l'air souffrante*—as our neighbours say.

Mrs. Fermor was out of sight.

One glance Clarice had given to the place where I stood; she had then turned a little, and placed herself

so, that her eyes could no longer meet mine. But I could see her kneeling down, I could watch the pure expression of that sweet face in its holy and innocent devotion—that face rendered doubly and doubly dear by the sadness, which certainly was to be detected there.

My Clarice, was it thine absent Edmund? Thy doting, thy adoring Edmund? Was it his absence that thus had shaded thy choicest features, and darkened the soft beauty of those lustrous eyes?

Alas! alas!

Service was over. Reginald hastily opened the door, and passing down the aisle, he placed himself within the porch as if to watch the congregation going out.

He did not speak one word to me.

I fancied that he had already in my disturbed countenance read the agitation of my thoughts. I never cast my eyes upon his, and soon ceased to think of him. What had Reginald and I in common at such a moment?

They came out, and my head was swimming. I did not go up to them, but they all came up to me.

Mr. de Vere kindly shook my hand.

"I did not know, Edmund, that you were returned. How is your father? You are of course, bound for us?"

"Edmund," said Mrs. de Vere, "how glad we are to see you safe back again."

"Ah, dear Edmund!" cried my sweetest Clarice, with the most animated pleasure dancing in her eyes, and holding out her hand, "how very, very glad we all are to see you again!"

Fool! even this undisguised and artless joy flattered me.

"We have wanted you so," said she, taking my offered arm, "and I thought you never would come back. I have a thousand things..."

"You are coming on to us?" said Mr. de Vere.

"Not to-day," I replied, with a little hesitation, "I have an engagement with a friend; the day after to-morrow if you will take me in, I shall be delighted to resume my old lodgings."

"Be it so," said Mr. de Vere, "but in the mean time, come home to luncheon, which is waiting. It is difficult to guess from what quarter of the heavens you drop so suddenly among us; but whencesoever, you are welcome. You must give us a quarter of an hour, Edmund, at least, this morning. That gentleman is your friend I apprehend," turning politely to Reginald, "will he do us the favour also to take luncheon at Holmicote?"

"Introduce me," said Reginald, giving me a hasty push.

"Mr. Vernon—Mr. de Vere."

Reginald now came forward, looking excessively elegant, gentleman-like, and handsome. So I had ever thought him; but he at that moment surpassed himself. How beautiful his charming features looked, his colour just heightened by a slight shade of embarrassed consciousness, which just subdued their usually gay expression, and rendered them the more interesting; how agreeable was his tone of voice; how distinguished, yet how frank and simple, his air and appearance!

I saw the experienced eye of Mr. de Vere glance over him, and the dignified distance of demeanour which he usually maintained before strangers, give way as by a charm. He was always polite and courteous, however cold; but now something less reserved served to show that he had met with one of fine taste, and who satisfied his high requisitions; a being of his own element, as one might say, was before him.

He was visibly captivated, and turning to his wife and daughter, introduced—a very rare favour—the young stranger to them.

Never had Clarice, lovely as she was, looked so surpassingly lovely as she did at the moment, when her father turning suddenly round to where she stood, presented Reginald to her. Her face yet glowing with the pleasure of our meeting; the slight embarrassment with which she received his salute; the womanly dignity and childish ingenuousness mingled of her expression.

Oh, my heart! my heart! why dost thou dwell on days so long gone by? Cannot the wintry snows that blanch these scanty hairs—cannot they yet—have they not yet, chilled into cold oblivion, those hours of feverish joy?

How proud was I! Her father was not more pleased than poor Edmund.

Proud he certainly looked now, indifferent as he too often seemed to this choicest creature; even his eye glistened with a father's pride as he presented this matchless pair to each other. And I, poor simple-hearted Edmund, how did I in secret glory in my handsome and captivating Reginald!

It crossed my mind hastily—"What will Mr. de Vere feel and say when he discovers who he is? And what will they think of me for thus presuming to introduce the son of Mr. Higgins?"

But there was no remedy.

Reginald with the assurance so natural to us all, that what is so well known to ourselves is not unknown to others, never adverted to the circumstance of his name, nor indeed could he possibly have divined that any importance could attach to the matter. How could he imagine that his father, in purchasing the Mount Sorel estate, had committed an offence, which, by Mr. de Vere, would never while he lived be forgiven?

Hours were earlier then than they are now, and fearful that we should be too late for Mr. Higgins' dinner, we declined luncheon; but as the carriage did not appear, and the ladies seemed intending to walk home, by a short cut across the park with which I was well acquainted, we strolled on a little way in their company.

Reginald was politely occupied with Mr. and Mrs. de Vere; while I followed with Clarice and Mrs. Fermor.

"And now do tell me," she impatiently began, as soon as we were relieved from the presence of the other three, "do tell me, Edmund, whence you come, where you are staying, and why you could be even a day in England without letting us know?"

"I have been in England only a week, Miss de Vere," I began, with a little formality.

"Oh! that is it," smiling sweetly in my face. "Is this your new Parisian style, Mr. Edmund Lovel?"

"Ah, Clarice! may I still...."

"And why should you not? Why, Edmund, you are quite unintelligible. You are in England a week, and do not come near us; and when you do...you really hardly seem to know how to behave yourself. Does he, Mrs. Fermor?"

Mrs. Fermor looked at me—she felt my arm shaking—she was leaning upon it.

"That is a very elegant, charming looking young man," she said, as if to divert the conversation. "Who is he? Vernon is not a name belonging to this county."

The eyes of Clarice glanced eagerly my way.

"A college friend," I replied, slightly. "We have travelled together, and are just returned. I am staying at his father's house, who is...."

"He must live at a considerable distance from this," said Mrs. Fermor, "for I know no name..."

She was interrupted by the party which was in advance of us, stopping. Reginald was making his apologies and taking his leave. I heard Mr. de Vere ask the favour of his company to dinner on the day I was to come to his house—that is to say, on the day after the morrow.

Reginald accepted with evident pleasure. I was forced then to make my adieus also; and thus we separated, and no explanation was offered.

CHAPTER XV.

Farewell! thou art too dear for my possessing
And, like enough, thou know'st thy estimate.
The charter of thy worth gives thee releasing;
My bonds in thee are all determinate.

SHAKSPEARE.

WE walked towards home, for some time in silence. Reginald's exuberant spirits seemed to have altogether forsaken him. He still with his cane decapitated sundry towering thistles which grew by our path; but he spoke not one word.

Once or twice he sighed.

I was too uneasy myself, to attend to him. I felt dissatisfied with what had passed; I did not know exactly why; but I was inclined to quarrel with the manner of Clarice, I could not say wherefore; and more than half inclined to quarrel with Reginald for having led me where he did.

At last, I said, somewhat peevishly,

"Well, I did not see this sylvan divinity of yours, after all, Reginald, in pursuit of whom you have led me such a tedious walk this hot day."

"Oh! you did not?" was his reply, turning round,

looking in my face, and immediately resuming hostilities against the thistles.

"That is so like you, Reginald. I wonder you are not tired, by this time, of mystifying my simplicity. I am such a ready dupe, I am surely not worth the trouble of duping."

"So I think," was the answer, and off flew half-a-dozen more heads of purple thistles.

"Well, then," feeling quite cross, I did not exactly know at what; "the next time you go in chase of a country girl with curd and currant cheeks, and the manners of an Audrey, please to leave me out of the expedition."

"Vous croyez ?"

"Yes; I do think, that all the rhapsody in which you indulged this morning, was merely to gratify the very childish fancy you have for seeing one, not quite so active, and not quite so vigorous as yourself, killed with a walk in this intolerable weather."

"Poor philosopher!" said Reginald. "Of the stoic school—eh ?"

"What could you go for ?" I repeated.

"I thought you had found that out, already, most penetrating and sweet-tempered of Edmunds," said he, coming up to me in his usual pleasant way. "Friend of my soul, I thought thou hadst settled it—that it was simply for the pleasure of plaguing thee."

"You have done it very effectually, then," said I.

"So it appears."

And with one spring clearing a five-barred gate that

stood before us, he was in the next field; and had half crossed it before I could unfasten and open the gate.

I walked after him as fast as I could; but he kept before me, clearing at a bound every obstacle, which I so painfully and slowly toiled over; and when he had reached the Manor House, he opened the hall-door, went in, and I did not see him again till we all met at dinner.

Mr. Higgins was in his glory.

He had had a delightful walk, had seen a glorious prospect, and had returned during the heat under the shelter of his own extensive woods. He was in the highest spirits; talking away, in his most animated, discursive, and eloquent manner; and darting sundry sarcasms at his son, which in my opinion had much better have been omitted, as to the manner in which he had pleased to spend his sabbath.

Reginald parried all with his accustomed goodhumour, and kept his ground with his usual spirit. He declared himself a fool—quite incapable of entering into the more lofty views of others; and that a fool he feared he should remain, drivelling on in the paths of his stupid forefathers, from mere want of common ability to discern any that were much better.

"Did you ask Jones to dinner, then, according to the pious custom of our forefathers, which always led the parson to get drunk with the squire?" said Mr. Higgins, at last.

"I did not go to that church," said Reginald.

"Better and better!" cried Mr. Higgins. "Why,

Reginald is becoming a preacher hunter! Prithee, sweet youth! Didst thou go a pilgrimage, in search of that philosopher's stone—a profitable sermon?"

"Not exactly for the sake of the sermon, Sir, I confess,"—said Reginald, "but I went to a more distant church."

"And where didst go, my son?"

"To Holnicote," said Reginald.

The fire flashed from Mr. Higgins' eyes.

"To that insolent aristocrat's church!" said he, haughtily. "And what took you there, of all places in the world—may I ask?"

"Ask Edmund," said Reginald, colouring.

"Nay, Reginald," I said, "don't ask me to find a reason."

"I hope, Sir," said Mr. Higgins, again haughtily; "that though I tolerate in you, certain, pretty-fellow, coxcombical, Jemmy Jessamy notions—in pity to the prejudices of that blood which, on one side, runs in your veins—that a mean, cringing, fawning, sycophancy to the would-be-great men of this would-be-great world, is not to be numbered among your fashionable accomplishments."

"I should hope not, Sir," said Reginald, temperately.

"Mr. de Vere," said Mr. Higgins, raising his voice; "has not thought it worth his while to cast his high-descended aristocratical eyes so low as upon me,—'why should the beams of the great Phœbus gild a dunghill?' I scorn his empty pride, and despise and pity his absurdity."

Reginald was silent.

"Well, Sir!" said Mr. Higgins, beginning to lose his temper; "do you mean to say that you will stoop to curry favour with one, who presumes to look down upon your father?"

"Curry favour!" repeated Reginald—his colour began to rise, and the blue veins in his temples to swell.

We sat by silent and aghast, at this sudden and unexpected explosion.

"Don't bandy words with me, Sir!"

"I don't use to bandy words with any man," said Reginald, commanding himself with great effort; "and most certainly, least of all with you, Sir. And when I *know*—that any man presumes to hold lightly by my father, I shall know how to resent it."

"Know! What do you mean by putting an emphasis upon that word, Sir. Do you mean to insinuate, that what I assert you do not *know*."

"You may be mistaken, Sir," said Reginald, coolly.

"Mistaken! I am I own a *very* likely person to be mistaken! Heighday, boys!" turning to us with a sarcastic sneer. "I may be mistaken! it seems."

But we were all silent.

"No man thinks you less likely to be mistaken, in general, than myself," said Reginald; "but here I think you are."

"And your reasons! Your reasons! Most wise and experienced and far discerning youth—paragon of thine age! Velvet-bound epitome of all wisdom and all vir-

tue! Hear him! Hear him! Hear him!" said the father, scoffingly.

"A thousand reasons may be found for Mr. de Vere not choosing to call at Mount Sorel, besides a design to insult you," said Reginald, quietly.

He kept his temper and preserved his self-command astonishingly.

"Name! Name! Name!"

"I will leave your own candid mind to suggest them, Sir," said Reginald.

And dipping his fingers in his finger-glass, he deliberately wiped his hands, and saying, "Come, Wickam, will you have a look how the mare gets on?" left the room with one of the company.

This broke up the table. An awkward pause of a moment succeeded, and then, as if by general consent, we all rose; and as Mr. Higgins did the same, we crowded to his end of the room, and began talking of all sorts of things to dispel our own embarrassment and his.

He evidently was disconcerted. He had received a check before us all, that he was little prepared for.

And yet the tone and manner of his son had been so perfectly unexceptionable that it was impossible to feel him to be in the wrong. The self-command he had displayed, his firmness, his spirit, and his temper, had astonished us all.

His father, accustomed to exercise the most unbounded and unresisted sway over every one who came near him, felt as if some sudden and unexpected obstacle had sprung up before his path: much as one, who has

raised a spirit that he does not exactly know how to lay.

He was, however, too proud to endure the thought, that any human being should suspect that the man existed, with power to quell, oppose, or embarrass him: so he shook off the momentary impression—"like dew-drops from the lion's mane:" and though his mirth and his talk were at first somewhat forced, we had soon the comfortable feeling that he was himself again.

Reginald appeared at tea as usual; the only difference that I could perceive in his manner was, that he laughed rather more loudly at his father's jokes, and was more emphatic in his expression of assent, or at least admiration of his ingenious paradoxes and brilliant sallies than the rest.

This innocent flattery altogether restored Mr. Higgins to goodhumour; and we spent, after all, a very pleasant evening.

As we went up to bed, Reginald and I happened to be left the last, lighting our candles.

"What shall you do about Mr. de Vere's invitation?" said I.

"I accepted at the time," he replied.

"But it is very awkward and very disagreeable. Really, Reginald—it is very perplexing—very untoward for you."

"Dear Edmund, what a treasury of uncomfortable words you do possess. When a man has made an engagement, I suppose he ought to keep it—that is all."

"But after what passed to-day."

"Don't speak of it, dear Edmund," said he, colour-

ing a little; "let such things be forgotten as soon as passed. Slight clouds, indeed, in a lot such as mine!"

"But your father ought to have weight, surely."

"I love my father, Edmund,—his wishes have great weight—I shall endeavour to do what my father's son ought to do."

"But, how will you get off with Mr. de Vere?"

"I shall not get off with Mr. de Vere."

"What! Shall you dine there?"

"To be sure I shall."

I looked surprised.

"Understand me, Edmund," he said. "Had Mr. de Vere, in any one instance, treated my father with insolence, this hand should wither before it would ever meet his in friendship. But the merely having omitted to call, when so many reasons may have prevented him, is surely not an offence that any gentleman should think it consistent with his own dignity to resent. I should be a puppy, indeed, to take upon myself to do it. The politeness and cordiality with which Mr. de Vere received me to-day, prove there is no intention of slighting my father; and this may be the means of making two clever and accomplished men, acquainted with each other."

I saw he was under a delusion with respect to his name; and I trembled lest, on Mr. de Vere's part, an exhibition at least as violent of prejudice and ill-will might burst forth, on the discovery who Reginald really was. But I thought it best not to undeceive him.

"I dare say you are quite right, Reginald," I said; "and I must add, as we are upon the subject, that your

temper, and self-command at dinner to-day, surprised while it gratified me excessively."

"I am very glad to hear you say so, Edmund. I am most anxious to do right in these matters. Your praise, dear Edmund, reconciles me with myself. I was afraid I had been rude. Dear Edmund, why is your approbation so indispensable to me?"

It was my turn to feel flattered now. Young and volatile as he was, there was that in him to which my soul bent as to its superior, and yet he seemed to do the same by me. That was perhaps, because I was *honest*. It is the only good quality on which I could ever pride myself.

We shook hands affectionately and parted.

CHAPTER XVI.

Nor framed his lips in truth entangling lines
To smile the lie his heart disdain'd to speak.

SHELLEY.

I DONT know how Reginald settled matters with his father; but he managed to explain things so, that the disinclination Mr. Higgins felt towards his aristocratical neighbour, yielded to the representations of a son, whom he certainly loved—as much as he was capable of loving any one or any thing; but his temper was of that robust nature which is not always affectionate.

I explained to my host that on the ensuing Tuesday I was to accompany Reginald; and that it was my intention to remain a few days at Holnicote before returning home.

"Well, I'm heartily sorry to lose thee, lad," said he, "and I'm half afraid we ha'nt washed all the old leaven out of thee. Thou still hankerest a little after these painted idols of a gone-by worship, I fear.... Think it a grand thing to be hand and glove with those fine De Veres, I suppose. Well, thou'rt welcome to thy

taste, man. Such fine porcelain articles are not for a rough hand like mine."

I thought I could penetrate under this, a little secret chagrin, that seemed to me quite inconsistent with Mr. Higgins' principles. Few, that ever I have happened to meet with in my pilgrimage through life, have I found quite proof against this sort of inconsistency, with one or two noble exceptions, who carry out their principles to their full extent in actual life and practice.

I told him that I was an old friend of the family, and had the highest respect for them all; a tribute paid to personal qualities that well deserved it.

"I dare say, I dare say," was his reply. "All these magnificoes; these men of high blood; these noble Normans! have personal qualities that entitle them to respect in the eyes of the base, cringing, venal crew that surround them.... For my part," he continued, "I like a plain honest labourer ten thousand times better; he has not such fine holiday manners it is true; but he's got an honest heart under his frieze coat."

I might have said that frieze and velvet had nothing to do with honesty, but I held my peace: to tell the truth, I was as much infected as any one with the cant of the day. I saw not the fallacies that lurked under the high sounding periods. I did not discern that, though, alas! it was too true that the aristocracy of England and of France, under the influence of those vicious principles which, dating from the day of the Regent of Orleans had prevailed for nearly a century, had considerably degene-

rated, yet that it was not among the uncultivated and the ignorant that we should look for those fitted and prepared to take their place. Alas! experience too soon demonstrated that luxury, oppression, sensuality and cruelty are of no condition; that they attend alike upon the possession of irresponsible power, be that power lodged with the highest or the lowest.

It was not the custom in those days for young gentlemen of our age, of ordinary rank or fortune, to order their carriage when they went out to dinner, and lolling like two young ladies to go out a visiting. Young men, unspoiled by the invention of cabs and tilburies, for even the humble whiskey had but just been called into being, rode on horseback; unless indeed, they could command the pomp of the lofty and dignified phaeton and four.

Any such piece of effeminate luxury, Mr. Higgins would have scouted; and Reginald had not been long enough in England to indulge his taste for these little refinements; so we were to go on horseback.

It was not considered to be against good manners then, for gentlemen to dine in their riding dresses. Our servants followed us; mine with his saddle-bags, containing such of my things as I should want, during my stay with Mr. de Vere; Reginald's with his master's great coat strapped round his waist. Neither of them in livery. Any such insolent badge of slavery, was contrary to all the liberal ideas of the day. Mr. Higgins would not tolerate it, in his family; and I, in this,

as in so much beside, acted under the influence of the same impressions.

Reginald had beautiful horses. There were certain things that he *would* have, let his father declaim as he might. He wore an elegant riding-dress; and was a beautiful figure on horseback.

I had a good horse, but I rode ill.

The contrast would have been sufficient to mortify a spirit less humble than mine; but it was difficult to mortify one who expected so little from himself. I admired the animated figure of Reginald; and as it never entered into my head to rival, was not tempted to envy him.

He was in high spirits, and made his beautiful horse curvet, and display his fine symmetry in a thousand graceful bounds as we went along. I see him now—his hand resting on his side, in a posture so graceful and easy—guiding his horse by that sort of magnetic intelligence, which seems to subsist between a good horse and a good rider; and chattering away with the overflowing gaiety of his age.

"But most venerated of Edmunds," he said, "have you ever considered, in your philanthropic heart, what I am to do with my most miserable existence, when deprived of you—my Achates—my Damon—my Pylades? Hang myself on the old hunter's oak? Or seek the frozen bosom of the lake, and pasture my father's pike and perches? Now, what must you go and stay at Holnicote for?

"Why, Reginald, you quite bore me upon that subject," said I, impatiently; "have I not told you? I

have known them all ever since I was quite a child; and it is a great shame that I did not make my first visit in the county there. But you bewitched me, as you always do; and I could not resist yours and your father's invitation."

"Very strange to my young and inexperienced intellect, and utterly confounding to my rationating faculties, are your proceedings, most consistent of men. —But," suddenly checking his horse, coming up close to my side, and looking me full in the face; "do you think Miss de Vere pretty?"

He startled me.

"What do you mean?" I said.

"Do you think her pretty, or not?—a categorical answer is demanded to a categorical question."

"Yes, I think she is pretty. She has not grown up so beautiful, as I thought, once, she would have been," answered I with as much composure as I could possibly command.

"Then you do opine—that you do not think her so transcendently lovely as, once, your foolish soft heart did hold her to be."

"I don't know," I answered carelessly, "I have known her so long. I don't think, or care much, about her beauty."

"You do feel all, and *more* than, a brother's love for this sweet perfection—do you not, mine Edmund?"

"Really, Reginald,"—I began to think he was passing the limits that even our friendship would allow; "I don't understand why you question me in this manner. If it be that you may have the pleasure of

laughing at me, and putting me out of countenance, on the subject of a very old and kind friend's daughter, you may spare yourself the trouble—I am proof. I have known Clarice de Vere too long; and she has known me too long; we have the sincerest friendship for each other."

"Is this the truth, Edmund?" said he, stopping his horse.

"Yes."

I prevaricated with myself; I, the lover, the worshipper of truth! I degraded myself so far as to satisfy my conscience with evasions. Ah! had I trusted so sincere a friend.

But my sensitiveness upon this subject was invincible. That any living being in my present state of wretched uncertainty, should discover my secret was insupportable to me; and the more perseveringly he pressed upon the matter, the more obstinately did I determine to baffle his penetration. I grew irritable and unjust, and began to resent as impertinent, this determination, as it seemed to me upon his part, to penetrate that which I had resolved to conceal.

I can only plead the miserable shyness of my too feeble character as a poor excuse for what I said next. Assuming an air of composure, I went on:

"You know, or you don't know—when one has known a girl from a child, and a child a good deal younger than oneself, one gets a sort of feeling—like relationship..... I love Clarice, dearly; she is a charming tempered, and generous-hearted creature; but I believe at my age men usually fall *in love*, as you know, with something older and cleverer than themselves."

He listened with attention, and a meaning in his penetrating eye. But he should *not*, I was determined, surprise the secret he seemed bent upon making himself master of. There were confidences, dear as he was to me, and great as was his influence over my mind, which he should owe to the deliberate purpose of my own will, and not possess himself of, whether I so pleased or not.

I was resolved to remain master of my own secret—and I perfectly succeeded.

After some time he seemed weary of his fruitless attempts to surprise from me, any, even the slightest, demonstration of feelings of a tenderer nature than those I professed; or to discover any thing which might justify him in the raillery in which he, evidently, was longing to indulge; and he dropped the subject.

As we approached Holnicote I began again to be troubled with uneasy thoughts upon the subject of Mr. de Vere's ignorance, as to whom my companion really was. I saw the circumstance had altogether escaped Reginald's attention; and I could not, I felt, enter upon it without attaching an importance to it, which might betray those feelings of dislike on Mr. de Vere's part, of which I was most desirous, for many reasons, to keep Reginald in ignorance.

I had, with my usual irresolution, hesitated to explain the real state of the case to him. I had feared that it might diminish that happy confidence of Mr. de Vere's good will, which I felt to be so necessary to insure the least chance for laying the foundation of any thing like cordiality between the families; but I

now began to consider, whether I had better give Reginald a hint of how matters stood, or whether I had best reserve myself for the possibility of making Mr. de Vere aware of the circumstance first. I was certain that his habitual politeness would prevent the intelligence, whether disagreeable or not, from diminishing the courtesy he owed to his guest. On the contrary, should Reginald learn the true state of the case, I thought it might make him feel annoyed and uncomfortable, and inclined to misapprehend Mr. de Vere's manner.

Leave him but an hour in Mr. de Vere's company, unembarrassed by such considerations, and I defied Mr. de Vere; for no one on earth could resist him.

There are characters with whom the counsel that demands *least action* is always sure to find favour; mine was of this cast; I determined to preserve silence.

We soon reached the lodge, and entered the somewhat flat and gloomy domain of Holnicote; I saw Reginald look round; he was contrasting its dark woods and somewhat rough pastures with the smiling and beautiful Mount Sorel.

"Your father has the best lot of the two," I remarked.

"Yes," he said, with something of a sigh, "I wonder that estate was ever alienated by the family."

"It was lost in the civil wars."

"Ay, I have heard all about it. But why did Mr. de Vere not endeavour to repurchase it when it was upon sale?" said Reginald.

"He did—he would!" I exclaimed, a sudden spasm of pain contracting my face.

"Why Edmund, what is the matter?"

"Don't ask me, my dear fellow—don't ask me. Some time, Reginald, I will tell you all about it—don't ask me now—oh Heaven!"

Reginald said not a word more; but walked on his horse a little in advance of mine, giving me time to recover myself before we reached the house, and his servant rang at the door.

Reginald gazed up at the front of the house, which though respectable, nay handsome, had a gloomy ill-favoured appearance on that side.

The door, however, was now flung open, and we were received by a venerable-looking butler, and two remarkably respectful and well-mannered footmen, and by them ushered into the house with all the quiet ceremony of a well-appointed household.

We first entered the dark low hall, which was hung with gloomy and very ancient pictures, and so heavily matted, that the sound of a footstep could scarcely be heard as it fell. The drawing-room door was then thrown open, and we entered.

The ladies alone were there.

Reginald came in with, if possible, more than the usual elegance and good-breeding of his look and manner, with more than the usual sweetness in the expression of his bewitching eyes and countenance; he paid his compliments in terms so engaging, that I saw, at once, the favourable impression he had at first made was strengthened.

He bowed but did not address Clarice, and seating himself between Mrs. de Vere and Mrs. Fermor, was soon engaged in what appeared to be a very agreeable

conversation; while I, too happy, sat down by my charmer.

So near as we both sat to where he was placed, it was impossible to mention him, so that I could make no allusion to that subject of his name which I so much wished to explain to her. I began to talk, therefore, of other matters; but I found with no little feeling of internal chagrin, that she seemed more anxious to attend to the conversation that was going on beside us than to listen to me.

I comforted myself, however, as well as I could, thinking, that our conversations were usually of far too intimate and confidential a nature, to be entered upon with pleasure before strangers: and besides, she seemed so happy to have me near her again: and though her eyes took part in the conversation that was going on, they perpetually turned and appealed to me when any thing that struck her attention was said, she at the same time demanding, in a low tone of voice, such explanations as might be required. So that I felt we were keeping up a sort of running comment upon Reginald's discourse. It was at length interrupted by the appearance of Mr. de Vere; upon which dinner was immediately announced.

At dinner Reginald was extremely agreeable.

Mr. de Vere, who seemed completely captivated by his manners, led him into conversation. Our tour, but above all, the vast political events which we had witnessed at Paris, furnished, in truth, matter interesting enough. But well as I knew Reginald, I was astonished at the spirit and power of description, with

which he detailed the mighty scenes of which we had been spectators.

He began to describe the fall of the Bastile.

Again I heard the howling multitude, pouring through the narrow streets, and between the lofty houses of ancient Paris. Again, the loud booming cannon of the Bastile pealed through the air. Again, the deep toll of the tocsin sounding at intervals, sent the blood back to the heart. Again, that mighty roar of the infuriated people swelled far above the booming of ten thousand cannon. Again, they swept irresistible over the frowning barrier. Again De Launay, pale and trembling, "but not with fear," was torn forward amid the yelling host; again his daughter fell prostrate at the feet of those enraged and passionate people, and supplicated for his life in vain.

Once more I saw that old man—whom with our own eyes we had beheld — the miserable victim for forty years of irresponsible power, and vengeance unrelenting, come forth, sallow, hollow-cheeked, extenuated: like some poor plant blanched by seclusion from the heaven's sweet air: lifting up his bleared eyes in painful amazement to the blue shining vault and gladsome sun.

I saw the breast of Clarice heaving. I saw her eyes in a sort of wild terror, reflect the scene. I saw the varying colours flit over her face—the glow of indignation and enthusiasm—the paleness of horror. At last, the pitying drops swelled to her brimming eyes, and fell one by one unheeded on her cheek.

All sat in mute attention. Mr. de Vere's cold im-

passible countenance bent forward in earnest attention towards the speaker; while Mrs. de Vere's faint shrieks and exclamations might be heard at intervals; Mrs. Fermor was wrapt in deep and silent listening.

Reginald was sitting opposite to me; I had taken my seat by Clarice. I saw him once or twice, in the course of his narrative, address himself to Miss de Vere, turning to her from her father: her countenance so expressively responsive to all he said, seemed to captivate him more and more. It seemed, at last, that he was addressing her alone.

"It was the terrible, but magnificent downfall of the despotism of ages," he concluded by saying.

"Yes," said Mr. de Vere, after a pause, "there fell a grand but dreadful engine of kingly power: but with it, fell the noble chivalry of Europe—with it, the era of lofty sentiments, unbought honour, generous loyalty! All that is noble and dignified; all that elevates man, and severs him from the base grovelling common crew, the swinish, brutish, earthborn multitude; with it, in that dark night of destruction, passed away."

"And the old man?" said Clarice, turning her darkly lustrous eyes, filled with interest and pity, upon Reginald. "That poor old unhappy man—what became of him?" and, shuddering, "M. de Launay?"

"He was massacred," said Reginald, "I saw him massacred."

"Oh, dreadful! And the old prisoner?"

"I confess, I thought still more of him than even of M. de Launay, Miss de Vere.... I saw him brought

out in the midst of that wild hubbub and confusion —the almost fiend-like exultation of a mob, exasperated to the wildest frenzy, under the excitement of the most unbounded triumph—his poor eyes seemed almost blinded by the light, his poor faculties quite confounded by the noise. He looked about him, with the sort of mournful bewilderment with which you may have observed some poor dumb creature, a dog for instance, look piteously around; in a strange surprise, and without power to make itself intelligible."

The ready tears again brimmed over her eyelids.

"And had he no one to take him home ?"

"All dead! A generation had swept away while he lay immured in a dungeon—for a song, Miss de Vere! half-a-dozen verses, on an execrable hard-hearted woman. He was come back from the tomb, but they were all dead; all he loved or knew had long been dead. He had only to go back to prison again."

The tears were over her cheeks now.

He looked at her—passionately.

While I—sunk in a mournful reverie, lost in reflections upon those dreadful contrasts; those wrongs on all sides; those inextricable entanglements of injuries and duties; that scene of anguish, violence, injustice, and heroism on every hand—only just lifted up my head to catch with a sudden terror, that glance from the ardent eye of Reginald.

"We will not forget," began Mr. de Vere, with some sternness in his voice and manner, "while we pity the victim of a worthless woman, that far more interesting victim of loyalty and generous devotion to his royal

master—of honourable adherence to military duty—the brave and unfortunate De Launay. That *was* a noble sight, if you please. That was a sight to redeem the character of man. One noble heart, supported by the undying bravery of half-a-dozen old wounded invalids, opposed to the brutal power of an immense infuriated mob—incapable of even conceiving, far less sympathising in, the lofty motives which actuated *him*."

"Oh, no, sir! there you mistake," I interrupted; "they *were* capable—they *proved* themselves capable. There were traits of generosity...."

"Don't talk such nonsense to me, Edmund. Don't let me hear you raving in that absurd manner about the generosity of a beastly herd of infuriated tigers who tore the noble De Launay into atoms..."

"Indeed, Sir!..."

"Indeed!" cried Mr. de Vere, raising his voice. "Let me hear no rascally Jacobin—I beg your pardon, Edmund," said he, suddenly interrupting himself, and recovering his composure and good manners, "but it pains me—however—I beg your pardon, Mr. Vernon, you were going to speak."

"I was only going to say..." began Reginald, "but really," he added, interrupting himself with much suavity, "really, I feel so far too young at present to make any reflections, that can be of the least value either to myself or to others upon such difficult subjects, that I will, like Miss de Vere, content myself with pitying all the world."

She looked at him so sweetly as he said this. Oh, my poor jealous heart!

Mr. de Vere seemed much pleased with the tone he took. It was so entirely without the slightest servility or weakness; it seemed so truly the simple expression of reverence for those older and more experienced than himself, and distrust in his own raw and *jejune* ideas; that it was very graceful.

Mrs. de Vere, too, in her gentle way, looked much pleased to see the rising storm allayed by this halcyon wing of candour and modesty. It had lately become far too much the custom for every one to assert and maintain their own principles with the most pertinacious dogmatism; and to express violent and most unmitigated contempt for the opinions of those who presumed to differ.

There was a pause.

Reginald sat for a short time, looking down, playing with some leaves that had fallen on his plate.

He started up from a deep reverie; when Mrs. Fermor, as if to divert the conversation, asked him something about Italy.

"Valombrosa? I beg your pardon, Madam. Oh! yes, Edmund," looking at me, and then directing his eyes to Miss de Vere; "you remember that night?...."

And off he was again; and surely had Milton, on his return from his travels, attempted to paint that scene, as we had seen it lit by a trembling moon, he had described as Reginald did: not as I, poor feeble artist, not as I can, or will attempt, to do.

Mr. de Vere was, to the inmost soul, a true artist—a poet, in his own way. To all that was grand or beautiful, every pulse of his heart responded.

He leaned his arm upon the table, and, both eyes bent down, listened as if charmed; while Reginald, led by the skilful questions of Mrs. Fermor, but his eyes most often addressing themselves to Clarice, wandered through that Italy, which then defended by its giant wall of Alp on Alp, possessed no high road, by which, dosing in his britshka-and-four, the indolent child of luxury on his summer tour, should roll into, and desecrate with his presence, its sacred associations.

I own that I was myself astonished at the extent of observation, the eloquence of the classical taste, and the extensive acquaintance with classical literature, which my friend displayed. Mr. de Vere soon ceased to listen only and began to converse; he was a very eloquent scholar himself; and he, to the regret perhaps of the ladies, soon carried Reginald away from Italy as it existed in his time, to wander with him among those associations of Italy as it once was, so enchanting to classically educated men.

Mrs. de Vere now rose to leave the room. Reginald sprang up to open the door. Was there ever any thing surpassing the charm of his attitude as he held it for her? Or the loveliness of the slight courtesy with which Clarice passed him.

Oh divine!—divinest love! Shedding inspiration, breathing beauty, grace and sweetness! An atmosphere as it were of loveliness and fascination around thy favoured votaries. . . . Why must thou, stern and pitiless, reverse the charm for the wretched victims of a passion yet more pure, yet more devoted, yet more true? Clouding the brow, bending and shaking the quivering

limbs, and refusing to the poor stammering tongue the power even to express its wretchedness.

"Love in thine eyes for ever plays,
He on thy snowy bosom strays,
He makes thy rosy lips his care,
And walks the mazes of thy hair.

"How different is my fate from thine,
No outward marks of love are mine,
My brow is clouded with despair,
And grief, love's bitter foe, is there."

Such were the reflections that began to darken my heart, as, sunk in the gloomiest reverie, I remained absolutely silent; while Mr. de Vere and Reginald continued their conversation, both too much occupied with their subject to observe my depression.

At length, on some subject arising which they could not quite settle to their satisfaction, they adjourned to the library, leaving me to my own reflections.

I was awakening as from a dream.

The fond, flattering visions of a peaceful night were fading rapidly away, and I was awaking to the drear truth.

He would love her then—if he did not already love her, he would.

And she? Ah! was she not already under the influence of that resistless charm, that ineffable fascination, possessed by Reginald? And I, poor Edmund! poor slow, heavy Edmund! what had I but a heart—a heart so true—a passion so deep . . . a love, stronger than death, ay, deeper far, than hell, or the grave! What had I?

My Clarice! my Clarice! my infant playfellow! my

little love! I feel thy waxen chubby hands round my neck. I have thee in my arms—I, the rough hewn, yet most tender-hearted boy! I feel thy little fluttering baby heart beating against my breast. My little love! I have thee still! No never! never! never!... Thou art mine—thou wert mine! Infant! baby! pretty girl! sweet feeling woman, of the sorrow-darkened eyes! thou art mine. He shall not love thee—thou art not his, thou art mine. Who has loved thee like me? Who can? who will?—whose entire of being has been thine, my Clarice! my little baby love!

Oh! thou arbiter of life! if I am to lose her—take me, take me, to thyself. Take me away: let me never see it, let me never hear it: but dying believe....

My love, my Clarice! my baby! my dark sorrow-eyed woman! thou canst not, thou wilt not, thou canst not, forget thine Edmund! thy poor, humble, clay-clad, thy heavy, earth-born, humble slave—thy Edmund!

And dropping my head upon my folded arms, as they lay on the dining-table, I burst into a torrent of tears. Fast they flowed, but the sound of a hand upon the lock of the door aroused me. I hastily gulped down a tumbler of water, and flinging my napkin upon the table, passed out by the open window upon the terrace.

It was dark, and the stars were shining brightly overhead: walking their silent courses: marking their paths of the vast, the interminable skies.

But, alas! I had been lately learning to regard as an old and childish superstition, that doctrine which saw the eye divine of Providence guiding these rolling

spheres; or watching over and providing for the wants of his poor tender helpless creatures. The being I acknowledged, I had been taught to shroud in one vast cloud of dim infinity, towards which I, poor atom, dared scarcely lift an eye.

In my desolation and in my despair I felt utterly alone. In this wide vessel of the universe, beat no heart responsive to mine. No pitying power, no infinite of love or mercy, under the shadow of whose wings was rest. In the cold desolation of my death-like creed, there was no one better and greater than my wretched self with whom to hold communion.... I was alone, utterly alone: in the hour of my solitary despair.

I might look up, but no answer met *my* eye. I might resign myself to my destiny: there was no one to whom the sacrifice could be offered. I might renounce the all that bound me to existence, and whither for comfort should I fly?—I own it: my heart is formed of soft and yielding stuff. I long for sympathy, communion, and pity. Ah! could I but have believed!.... "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him!" Could I but have believed *that* at that moment, what an infinite of consolation would it have been to me!—my heart ached for it.

But there was no such comfort for me. I hurried up and down the garden, endeavouring to tranquillise my looks and recover my composure. I saw the lights glancing from the drawing-room windows, and knew that they would be beginning to wonder at my strange absence.

At length I ventured in.

They were all sitting happily as it seemed together, at tea. Mrs. Fermor and Mrs. de Vere were at the tea-table; the hissing urn before them dispensing the fragrant luxury in cups of the finest porcelain, which the footmen were carrying about. At a table in the centre of the room sat Mr. de Vere and his daughter. They were turning over and examining some large maps and views of Rome. Reginald was leaning forward between them, explaining and describing with great animation and looking excessively happy.

I was turning away quite sick, but as soon as I entered the room she lifted up her sweet face, and calling to me, made a motion for me to take the empty chair that stood by her side. Could I refuse?

I sat down, but I did not enter into the conversation; I remained gloomily silent leaning back in my chair, overwhelmed with a melancholy that it was impossible for me to overcome or to conceal.

The conversation, meantime, continued in a very animated manner, and I was left unheeded and, as I thought, neglected; but, as Mr. de Vere turned to Reginald and engaged him in some discussion, and he was eagerly explaining his meaning and referring to the maps and plans before them, Clarice turned her sweet anxious eyes upon me, and bending down her head, said,

"What is the matter, dear Edmund? You look so miserable—are you not well?"

"I have a dreadful headach," I said, "take no notice

of me, Clarice. Let me sit quietly here by you: only excuse me from talking. You know I am no brilliant describer."

"I know," she said in a low tone, "that you are all that is kind and good to me. And do not you rejoice," added she, almost in a whisper, and glancing at her father, "to see *him* so happy to-night?"

I looked up at her face, but she was not thinking of me at that moment; she was gazing at her father and Reginald with looks of the greatest satisfaction.

"Were you speaking, Miss de Vere? Did I hear you speak?" said Reginald, again turning to her with looks of the liveliest pleasure.

"And these, then," said she, taking up the plan of Rome, which her father was examining, "these are the Baths of Titus; and here is the Colosseum, Oh, Sir!" to her father, "I think you, too, must see Rome."

"Will you cross Mount Cenis with me, Clarice?" said he, smiling.

"Yes, with the greatest, greatest pleasure. Oh, papa! if you would but go."

Her whole kind heart was speaking in her face. Trifling was the matter, but she was at that moment flattering herself that a tour of this sort might dissipate the melancholy which had so long hung over him. And she spoke with that simple earnestness which made her so interesting.

I cast a look upon Reginald; he was gazing at her with an intensity of admiration! He sighed—checked himself—sighed again.

I felt choking,—but I turned my head away, and

leaning on my hand, appeared to be, as indeed I was, absorbed by suffering. Mrs. de Vere came kindly up to me.

"My dear Edmund, I am afraid you are not well?"

I lifted up my head. What a woe-begone countenance was there! I could not help it—I could resist the agony I endured no longer. There, by her very side! it was insupportable.

I rose hastily from my chair. "Thank you, ma'am," I said, "I cannot tell what is the matter with me; but, I dare say I shall be better with a little more fresh air," and I went towards the window.

The eyes of Clarice followed me inquiringly—anxiously—but I was resolved to master myself. I stood at the window a few moments, and then, throwing myself upon a distant sofa, behind the place where Mrs. Fermor and Mrs. de Vere were sitting, took up a book, and endeavoured to occupy myself with reading.

Reginald looked once or twice at me, as if he could not quite comprehend what I was about; but the servant soon after entering the room to announce that his horses were at the door, he rose to take his leave.

"Are you not going to stay all night?" said Mr. de Vere. "We are sorry to part with you."

"I thank you," he said, "but I am not provided; and besides, the distance to my father's house is too trifling to think of. I shall do myself the honour of calling soon, and bringing the drawing I spoke of. I think you will be pleased with the Tivoli."

He made his adieus to the ladies, and as he passed me, said, "Come, Edmund, you shall see me to horse."

I rose reluctantly to follow him.

"What is the matter, my dearest fellow?" said he, anxiously. "What *has* happened, Edmund?"

"Only that I really have the most provoking and intolerable headach."

"Is *that all?*"

"What else should it be?" said I, hastily.

He looked into my eyes, and then he said:

"Be it so. It *is* so, blest insensible Edmund! Oh, Edmund, if I am not crossing your path; if I am not endangering your happiness; I am the happiest rascal on the face of the earth. Fool—puppy," cried he, interrupting himself, "to venture to say so. Well, good night, Edmund; I hope you will be better in the morning," and mounting his horse, followed by his servant, he rode quickly away.

CHAPTER XVII.

> Thus have I had thee, as a dream doth flatter
> In sleep a king; but waking no such matter.
>
> SHAKSPEARE.

I RETURNED to the drawing-room.

And now the long-deferred moment of explanation arrived.

"Upon my word, Edmund," began Mr. de Vere, "that friend of yours, Mr. Vernon, is one of the most agreeable young men that I have met with for a very long time. Where did you pick him up? Before your travels, I understood."

"We travelled together with the same tutor; but I had known him at —— Academy," I began.

"And who is he? What county man? He spoke of his father's house as being not very distant from this place; but I must have misapprehended him. He is on a visit probably where you were visiting; and where is that, Edmund? It is time we should hear something of your whereabouts," continued Mr. de Vere, with more than usual cordiality.

His frozen indifference of manner seemed for once to have yielded to the enjoyment of the evening.

"Where were you staying, within so short a distance of this place?"

"At Mount Sorel," said I, after a little hesitation, and stammering slightly.

There was a general start. If I had said in the county-gaol, they could not have looked more shocked.

"At Mount Sorel!" repeated Mr. de Vere, with a marked displeasure in his manner. "What, Edmund! do I hear rightly? Are *you* making one of that wild jacobinical crew which, as I understand, it is the pleasure of Mr. Higgins to assemble around him, in that nest of sedition he calls his own. You cannot have been visiting *there*."

"Indeed, Sir!" I said, hesitating more and more—the subject was so unpleasant.....and I had so much of that sensitiveness which shrinks from approaching a painful subject, that I could hardly bear even to utter the word Mount Sorel in Mr. de Vere's hearing, far less to speak of its proprietor; and yet to hear him mentioned in terms such as these without saying any thing in his defence, was a meanness of which even I, depressed, disheartened, and wretched as I felt, was incapable. "Indeed, Sir!" said I, endeavouring to speak with composure, "Mr. Higgins is not a person of this sort at all. He is a man of first-rate ability, and the society he gathers round him at Mount Sorel...."

"I dare say... first-rate ability, no doubt," repeated Mr. de Vere, contemptuously "so are they all. Well, Edmund," said he, pausing a moment to recover his temper, "I wish I had found you in better company."

"I am sorry, Sir, that you think of it as you do."

"*That* it is impossible to help, Edmund. Such men and such principles I have always held in mingled contempt and abhorrence. But this is their day, and it is absurd to wonder at the influence exercised by such notions over the weak, or at the use made of them by the designing—at the man, the slave of his own imagination; or at the knave, who is pursuing the basest self-interest while he is exalting the imagination of others, and setting the whole structure of society in a blaze that he may roast his eggs in the ashes."

I was silent. I was too much dispirited to make any further defence. I saw the kind eyes of Clarice looking at me anxiously.

"As for the man they call Higgins," continued Mr. de Vere, "I understand he is a low, seditious fellow, who employs himself in sowing the seeds of disaffection wherever he goes; and amuses himself, and the world around him, by gathering together a crowd of foolish, hot-headed young men, who worship his eccentricities, adopt his paradoxes, and swear by his name; among whom I am very sorry to number you, Edmund."

"But, Mr. Vernon," said Mrs. de Vere, willing as usual to turn the channel of this irritating conversation; "you have not told us who Mr. Vernon is?

The moment was arrived—out with it I must. Yet why should I be so weak as to be ashamed—I coloured crimson.

"He's the son—the son—" I hesitated—and every moment I hesitated, I felt that I was making myself only more and more ridiculous. "He's the son of —Mr. Higgins!"

It was said. There was again a universal start—a much more significant start than that before. The brow of Clarice suddenly contracted, as with a spasm of pain; and she bent hastily forwards to look into her father's face.

Mr. de Vere sat perfectly still, but he turned deadly pale. At last he said, very coldly,

"That was the last man, I should have thought, you, Edmund, would have introduced here."

"Indeed, Sir," I began, "I should not have thought of presuming; I had no intention of doing any such thing; I should not have thought of venturing upon the liberty of introducing Reginald to you, until I had, myself, ascertained that it would—that it could not be unpleasant to you—but I had no reason to suppose—"

"Sir!" with a voice of thunder, "you might have had reason to suppose, you ought to have had reason to suppose, that wormwood is not so bitter, as that man's presence would be to me."

And violently thrusting back his chair, he rose, and with a countenance of high displeasure, instantly quitted the room.

My poor Clarice followed him with her eyes, and that sweet brow of anxiety, wonder, and sorrow.

Mrs. de Vere and Mrs. Fermor both looked exceedingly grave, and exchanged glances of great annoyance.

"Indeed, Edmund," at last Mrs. de Vere began, in a tone of gentle remonstrance; "this was very unfortunately done of you. Mr. de Vere is, upon this subject, upon this one subject, so very sensitive to pain, it is very desirable to avoid any thing that can possibly recall—be associated with—"

Clarice turned to me with interrogating, but I did not think, with reproachful eyes.

"I had no idea of the extent—how should I?" I began. "How could I divine that the sight of Reginald Vernon, so entirely, so perfectly innocent—innocent! ..... Nonsense! So little involved in this affair—could—could have been productive of such unpleasant consequences—I would not on any account...but indeed—" And I related how the affair had actually taken place.

The eyes of Clarice were cast down as I spoke; her brow retained its painful expression; but the least possible intimation of a smile was upon her lips.

Mrs. de Vere and Mrs. Fermor looked as grave and uncomfortable as ever.

"How *could* I guess, dear Madam?" I continued, in a deprecating tone. "Could I, by possibility, have formed an idea of the pain I should so unwittingly occasion, I would have killed myself rather than have entered the church that day. I am deeply sorry to have given pain: but I think I am only born to give pain—" I added, despondingly.

"You were not likely—you were not in the least likely, Edmund," said Clarice, looking up and speaking so earnestly and kindly; "how should you, indeed, guess—how should you know?"

"Alas! Edmund," said Mrs. de Vere, "that is very true—how should you, indeed?"

"But Mr. de Vere: I am so grieved to have displeased him: shall I go to his room and endeavour to explain?"

I was rising hastily—

"No," said Mrs. Fermor, laying her hand upon my arm to stop me—"no, Mr. Edmund—no;" and she glanced at Mrs. de Vere; "you had better not; you had better wait till morning."

"Don't vex yourself, dear Edmund," said my sweetest Clarice, seeing me look so much annoyed; "it will all be forgotten in the morning—poor papa! Some things are so excessively painful to him; but don't vex yourself; it cannot be helped."

How sweetly caressing were her kind, affectionate tones!

"No," said Mrs. de Vere, "pray don't, Edmund."

Mr. de Vere appeared no more that night; and after a short time we all, feeling very uneasy, separated.

I retired to my room—shocked and astonished at what I had seen. Could it be possible that Mr. de Vere had nourished so unreasonable a prejudice against his neighbour, chiefly because he had happened undesignedly to step in between him and this coveted estate. Could he not even tolerate the idea of his son? A man with whom he had evidently been quite delighted till he discovered his unfortunate parentage.

Was this Mr. de Vere? a man, haughty and stern, it was true, but one I should have thought utterly incapable, of what did seem to me—I will say it—a most culpable injustice.

I was more provoked at him at that moment than at myself; a feeling almost new to me, who always, by some unfortunate concurrence of circumstances, seemed fated in every untoward transaction, to be myself the one most to blame.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I grant, sweet love, thy lovely argument,
Deserves the labour of a worthier pen.
SHAKSPEARE.

AND oh! sweet, tender Clarice, must we follow thee to thy chamber, and betray the secrets of thy innocent heart? Must we picture thee, glancing at thyself in thy mirror; gazing with a look of shy distrust at those features, and at that beauty, now no longer indifferent to thee?

Thou takest from thy bosom those few flowers: he had gathered them, on the terrace, as he passed with Mr. de Vere, and had offered them to thee. Thy white dress hangs in folds round thee; thou takest out the comb which held back the rich treasure of thy beautiful dark hair, and it showers over thy neck and shoulders; while thou, sighing and looking down, lost in the sweet fancies of that most tender love now springing in thy gentle bosom, art thrown listlessly upon thy chair, gazing pensively upon those withering flowers.

Again those brightly beaming eyes, sparkling with intelligence and feeling, are meeting thine. Again the

accents of that voice hangs upon thine ear, as sweetest, sweetest music. Thou recallest it all; every syllable that fell from those lips. It seems to thee, that every word has melted into thine heart.

Sweet, tender creature! and yet thou art ignorant of all this. Thou art ignorant of the very name of those bewitching feelings that are stealing away thy soul.

Ah, blest! too blest! to wander by his side; to be for ever animated by that sparkling intelligence, that fire of energy, nature, and feeling. She hangs over the flowers, she gazes into their beautiful bells; she would fain read there his fate, and her own.

Then she remembers whose son he is. Alas! alas! Then she recollects with dismay, those bitter feelings which *her* father has secretly nourished against *his* father; betrayed by so many involuntary indications, though never distinctly expressed. She remembers all that she has heard of that father; of his rudeness, his violence, his dreadful democratical principles; and she wonders that such a father can have reared such a son.

And again the sweet vision passes before her imagination; she sees those beautiful eyes bent upon hers, with an expression of tender interest, which even she, inexperienced as she is, cannot mistake. And then her life, till now so colourless, so devoid of interest, assumes a new character, as when the sun burst forth and illuminates the leaden coloured landscape with a sudden glow of light and life. So was it with Clarice.

But her father. Will he tolerate the presence of one, the son of the man he hates and despises? And that father!.... The strongest, deepest interest of Cla-

rice's life, was, after all, that father; cold as he was, stern as he was, reserved as he was, the mysterious sympathy which unites father and child, had taught Clarice as by a sort of instinct, to understand and to sympathise with his feelings. That melancholy solitude of soul, the groanings of the deep and incurable disappointment which was overlooked and misunderstood by every one else, she had comprehended; and her young heart had bled in secret for him; and a still deeper and intenser interest than that which a tender child feels for a suffering father, had long rendered him the prime object of her attention; and the study of her life was to endeavour to make him happy. She loved her mother with the utmost tenderness; to her she ever was most caressing, gentle and fond; but her father was become the main subject of her thoughts.

During the two years of my absence, she had been left almost entirely to herself. She had no intimate companions of her own age; and with the exception of those assembled at the formal dinner parties, no one was ever invited to pay a visit at Holnicote. My father alone excepted. So that Clarice lived in that solitude of thought and feeling which is the lot of the young, when confined to the sole society of the aged; but she was naturally of a gay, cheerful, and loving disposition; and with her garden, her grottos, her little plans, her domestic pets, and her pious duties to her parents, she would have been happy could she but have seen them happy.

Her mother's gentle depressed spirits exercised a somewhat depressing effect upon those around her. But a

darker interest hung round Mr. de Vere; there was something beyond ordinary depression in his settled melancholy, and in the deep distaste he seemed to feel for life, with all its interests and enjoyments. The sort of isolation in which he lived too, that virtual separation from his family occasioned by the reserve and severity of his manners, was source of constant pain to the affectionate Clarice.

She could not but lament, in the father she loved and honoured, the coldness of his manners to the mother she loved so tenderly. She could not but regret, that the mother so dear could not command a more cheerful and genial temper.

She wanted to make them all happy; but how often were her best efforts disappointed, and how often were her beautiful eyes darkened with unavailing anxiety and pity. She was leading after all, a gloomy life; when she was gladdened by the sight of my return, it was to her as the restoration of all that would make her happy. She remembered the enjoyment of those days that we had spent together when we were both so young, so ignorant of ourselves and so happily blind to much that was passing around us; and with fond credulity—with Edmund returned, she expected those happy feelings to return too.

Alas! sweet Clarice, such years return no more! thou hast past, my sweet one, the threshold of youth, and forth thou must go to fulfil the mysterious destiny of thy race: to suffer and to struggle—the victim of hope deceived, of purpose frustrated, of feelings wasted, and of devotion thrown away.

The serene composure of thy feelings hath left thee and for ever. Thou hast given thy young heart with heedless innocence away. In the sweet ignorance of thy age, poor child, thou didst not even know what thou wert about, as thine ears drank the bewitching poison from the lips of thy Reginald; and thine eye gazed with delight and gratitude upon him, who beguiled for the moment the melancholy of thy father.

Nurse came up, as was her custom, to put Clarice to bed. Nurse was a dear creature; a nice, little, round, rosy-cheeked, bright-eyed Welsh woman; she was her foster-mother, and the child had loved her with that peculiar tenderness, which the habit of fostering, as it at that time existed, engenders. As for nurse, she was a young widow when taken into Mr. de Vere's family; her own child had fallen a victim to the vicious custom of that delegation of that first of duties, which was at the time so universal. So that she had remained in the family attached to Clarice, as her nurse and waiting-maid; and in this last capacity she still attended upon her.

A confidence subsisted therefore between her and her young lady, which was altogether an exception to the usual terms of such connexions. Nurse had long in secret lamented the seclusion to which her lovely charge seemed to be condemned; and it was with great satisfaction she learned that Master Edmund, as he was called, was come back. She had always secretly favoured Master Edmund, and had indeed long regarded him as the eventual husband of her dear young lady.

She now came up in high spirits, and surprised her charge; sitting, as we have said, negligently reclining in

her chair, wrapped in her long muslin dressing-gown, and with her beautiful hair all falling over her shoulders, her eyes bent on the floor, and lost in thought.

"Cracious me, my dear young lady," she began, "I never hear't you ring."

"Goodness, nurse! is it you?" cried Clarice, starting, and colouring to the eyes, "how you startled me."

"I thought you must be come up to bet, and that you must have rung and I not hear't it—for master and Master Edmunt are both gone up to their rooms a quarter of an hour ago. Well, I dit see Master Edmunt, and I do think he's looking mighty pretty after his travels. He's grown bigger and thinner like, and a fery nice young man he is. Don't you think, dear, as how Master Edmunt is looking fery pretty?"

"I didn't observe it, nurse," said Clarice, languidly. "Poor Edmund! now I recollect, I didn't think he was looking well—or pretty, as you call it, dear nurse. He's grown very pale, and he said he had a bad headach; he looked out of spirits, I thought."

"Well, my dear, I do wonder at that—and he just come home among the friends he is so fond of."

"Ah! but nurse, you know he has been a very, very long time away, and perhaps he has seen some one during his travels that he is still fonder of. Suppose he should bring us home some morning, a beautiful Italian lady—like that fine creature, Clementina, in Sir Charles Grandison—what should we say then, nurse?"

"Cracious, my dear! how you do talk. Master Edmunt 'll nefer think of any foreign lady, I'm sure and certain, and..."

"But, nurse, did you see the other young gentleman, Edmund's friend, that came with him to-day?" said Clarice, hesitating a little.

"No; I didn't see him at all," said nurse; "but I've hear't of him; and who doo you think he be? Why he be the son of Higgins, as bought the old Manor House, as should by rights, all the country round say, ha' been master's—it's his son, and I think it pretty impetent of him, his coming here."

"I don't see why he should not come here, nurse."

"Why, it can't be fery pleasant for master for to see him."

"I can't think why not. Surely he was not to blame because his father bought the Manor House."

"Why, no, to be sure, Miss Clarice, he wasn't. He's a creet frient of Mr. Edmunt, too. And his man says he's the handsomest, cleverest, prettiest, best-tempert, most cracious creature, as ever groom rode after. He coot talk of nothing at supper but of his trafels and his young master; but they be such pragmatical puppies, them young grooms, that there's no believing a word that they say."

Nurse stopped, but Clarice continued in the attitude of one listening. Nurse went on.

"He'll be a fast fortin, his man says; as he's 's mother's fortin now, which is the reason he's called Fernon; ant that Higgins is as rich, as rich can be, and he's no other chilt, so all will come to this one; and he'll have Mount Sorel all as one. They doo say it's the beautifullest place in the 'orld, now, my dear."

A flash as of lightning shot through the eyes of Clarice; then she looked up at nurse, and said,

"So they say he is very clever and very good."

"My dear, them grooms—there's no believing them, they're always praising their masters up to the skies, or abusing them black and blue; but this one did speak *very* handsome of his master. He says he's chenerous, brave, and coot, and all the 'orld knows it, and all the 'orld lofes him. And, indeed, my dear, to say the truth, I dit think there was somethink even in that young man his groom, not exactly like the ordinar of other grooms; as iss the master, so iss the man. But that Higgins is a strange one."

Again the colour forsook the cheek of Clarice, as that name sounded like the knell of all her unconfessed hopes, and indistinctly defined fancies.

I passed a wretched night. Early in the morning I left my feverish, restless bed, and was down in the garden. I longed to see Clarice again; attracted to her, as by an invisible power. Sometimes I hoped that the morning light would dispel the dark gloom that hung over my spirits; that I should find my terrors, after all, were but the vain apprehensions of a nervous anxiety, and that daylight would restore the cheerful confidence of my former feelings.

I went to the beloved hermitage—she was there before me. She was sitting in an attitude of deep thought as I entered. How beautiful she looked!

"Do I disturb you?" I said, as she started and looked hastily round.

"Oh no, dear Edmund! When do you ever disturb me?" said she, with her usual gentle kindness. "I have hardly had a word with you yet. Come in, the breakfast bell will not ring this half hour. Sit down. Tell me what you think of my father," said she, anxiously.

"I think he looks thinner; but in other respects, well."

"You think he looks thinner. Oh, Edmund!" She checked herself. She felt how painful any allusion to the subject of his disappointment would be to me, and she hesitated.

"I am afraid, my dear Clarice," I said, "that this unhappy business cost him more, than even I imagined it would do when I left you. I am," added I, in a tone of deep depression, "fated to be the most hopelessly unfortunate man upon earth."

"Dear Edmund," said she, her sweet eyes filling with pity and anxiety, as she looked at me: "don't say so; don't look so miserable; don't blame yourself. It *was* no fault of yours—it was a misfortune, that is all. But pray, dear Edmund, don't take it to heart. I was wrong to mention the subject of my father to you; but indeed, Edmund, you must forgive me. You don't know the pleasure it is to talk things over with you. They are all very kind to me, but some way it is not like one of my own age, Edmund. Oh! how I have longed to have you back again!"

"My sweetest Clarice! Forgive me—I was very sorry. Let us talk of your father. He has felt this very much, I fear."

"I cannot understand it, Edmund. It seems very strange to me, that any loss of this kind should be so very hard to bear. I don't think it would break my heart; would it yours, Edmund? If one is with those one loves, how little it matters where we are; but I am afraid my father has been very unhappy; some way this seems quite to have changed him. I have heard the expression of the spring of life being gone; it seems to me as if the spring of my father's life were gone. He seems to care for nothing now.

"Poor little girl," continued she, playing idly with a bit of heath, and abandoning herself to the current of her thoughts. "Don't you recollect what a fuss there used to be made about me when I was a little child. And now I think he is almost as indifferent about me as he is about any thing else. I don't mind that, Edmund. I can love him dearly, and I don't want to trouble him about not loving me; but it is a proof he is secretly very unhappy, and will let no one share it,"—raising her head and looking at me anxiously. "Don't you fear so?"

"To be indifferent to you, Clarice, that must, indeed, be a proof of some strange madness."

She started at the word, turned very pale, and whispered, "What can you mean by using that dreadful word, Edmund?"

"My sweetest Clarice!"

"Did you observe?" said she, speaking very low and looking round. "Did you observe any thing yesterday that led you to use the shocking word you did?"

"No—I spoke inadvertently. I thought him more irritable than I had ever before known him to be—but—"

Alas! I had been too much absorbed by my own feelings, to think much of those of any other human being.

"No one does observe it but myself," said she, in the same low voice. "At least, no one but Mrs. Fermor perhaps. My mother—all the rest. I could hate myself, Edmund, but I never trusted to human being the horrid anxiety I have felt, before. My poor father! God in heaven avert this horrible thing!"

"My poor, sweet Clarice," said I, gazing at her with tenderness. "What you must have suffered!"

"I *have* suffered, Edmund; I have had the most terrible, shocking, horrid kinds of doubts, and suspicions, and fears, creeping over me for some time. Do you know?" laying her hand upon my arm and speaking still lower, "I have got secretly into my father's library, and have looked into all the books I could find upon this dreadful subject. Is there not a thing they call fever of the spirits, Edmund?"

"I have heard of it, my love."

"It arises from concealed sorrow, they say. Ah, Edmund, if my father would but have talked; would but have confessed how much this matter preyed upon his heart;—but he was ashamed of his weakness; he had that noble pride; but I think someway, it must be

a mistaken pride, Edmund—for I think it would be better to confess oneself weak when one is weak; and to lean on those we love to help us. Don't you think so, Edmund? Oh! if he would but have leaned upon me!"

"Who would not lean on thee, my sweetest Clarice?" cried I; the passion I felt was speaking in my eyes, but quite unperceived by her; she was intent upon her mournful subject.

"If you were to see him, days and days that he never opens a book or even a newspaper, but walks up and down that terrace or stands gazing upon those hateful hills as if his eyes were glued to the spot. And such a deep gloom upon his face! And then those horrid politics, Edmund, when he *does* open the paper—oh, Edmund!—the violence of the times is dreadful. I don't mean, Edmund," again whispering and looking round; "don't think I believe—thank God! I do not, that his reason—good heavens!" shuddering, "his noble reason—oh, that is not it! But it is this fever of the spirits; this something. Oh! I don't know what it is that I dread."

She looked the picture of distress.

"But oh! I am so glad you are come back, dearest Edmund."

I took her hand, and pressing it gently, said:

"There is but one remedy for a case of this kind, my Clarice—diversion. You have lived too much alone at Holnicote. My father is now come back; he will be much here, Mr. de Vere always enjoys his company. I will do my best. A little diversion of thought will set all right, I doubt not."

"God grant it," said she, "and indeed yesterday—I don't doubt that what you say is very true. How different he was yesterday from what I have seen him for years."

"Reginald is very agreeable," said I, coldly

"I thought he was your friend," said she, in a low voice.

I was ashamed of my unmanly jealousy.

"He *is* my friend, and the best and dearest friend I have."

She looked up in my face with an expression of innocent delight.

"Mr. de Vere seemed to take great interest in his conversation," I went on; it was, however, with difficulty; I was *making* myself speak, as it were; "I hope he will see more of him."

"But my father—and *his* father—oh, how unfortunate!"

"I should think that circumstance could not really diminish any pleasure Mr. de Vere may take in Reginald's society."

"I don't know. Surely it ought not; but you do not know how he hates that man. He must be a very horrid, detestable man, I suppose. But, oh! if my father could help hating him so."

"My dear Clarice," said I, quite amazed, "what can make you think him a very horrid, detestable man? He is rather rough, and, perhaps, sometimes almost coarse in his manners; but, in other respects, as worthy a man as lives, and very clever and agreeable."

"I thought he was a horrible democrat," she said.

"And if he be, my love, what great harm is there in that?"

"I don't exactly know, Edmund; but are they not all terribly violent creatures, that would overthrow our holy church and dethrone our good king, and do I know not what? And this Mr Higgins, I hear, is dreadful."

"My dear love, what strange prejudices have you contracted?"

"Oh, Edmund!" drawing back with a look of almost aversion, "I hope you are not one."

"My dearest Clarice, am not one what?"

"One of those horrid jacobins. Dear, dear Edmund, I hope you have not become perverted in your travels."

"What words you use, Clarice." Our political feelings were so ardent at that time that they mingled in, and influenced all, our dearest relations. "What! Is it possible! Can Clarice have no sympathies with those struggling for their existence, and for all that makes existence desirable? No interest in this grand contest against oppression and tyranny? I thought yesterday that you pitied the poor prisoner in the Bastile."

"And so I did—and so I do. But I hope you are not a democrat, Edmund," was her woman's answer.

"I don't know what you mean by a democrat, Clarice. If you mean one whose heart beats high for that noble cause—the liberty, and progressive improvement of his race—I am one, and I glory in the name."

"Good heavens!" cried she, eagerly, "don't let my father know it."

"Nay, Clarice, I am not going to play false to my own convictions."

"Alas! alas!" said she, sadly, "and must I lose you, too?"

"Lose me, my dearest, what do you mean?"

"Nay, they will none of them tolerate you, Edmund. But my father—alas! dear Edmund, so much as I have longed for your return."

She began to weep.

"What would you have me do? Don't weep, Clarice! don't weep;" cried I, with increasing tenderness of accent; "don't weep, Clarice. What shall I do, if you weep?"

She gave me her hand.

"Dear, kind Edmund—but don't, don't be a democrat."

"Well, I won't," said I, coaxingly.

"I am sure you cannot be one by nature," said she, brightening; "you were only plaguing me; you are much too wise; and too good, Edmund. And Mr. Vernon, is he a democrat?"

"Dearest Clarice, you use the term as if you were speaking of some monstrous wild beast. No, Reginald is rather less of a democrat, as you call it, than I am."

I was astonished at the strength of her prejudices; but I saw it would not do, she could not understand my feelings in this matter; I was forced to put aside my pride of sincerity. To please her, alas! my best principles, I fear, would have yielded; my best resolutions have melted like wax.

With the usual versatility of her sex and age, her

apprehensions were as speedily allayed, as they had been excited.

"How you frightened me!" said she, recovering herself; "foolish Edmund, I am sure you are too good for such things. But the breakfast-bell is ringing. Now do take care, dear Edmund, and don't be careless, as you have been with me—*he* might not be satisfied so easily."

CHAPTER XIX.

Possessions vanish, and opinions change,
And passion holds a fluctuating seat,
But subject neither to eclipse nor wane,
Duty exists.

WORDSWORTH.

WE went into breakfast together.

They were already all assembled. Mr. de Vere seemed to have forgotten the displeasure of the preceding evening, and his mind seemed still occupied by the ideas which the conversation of yesterday had engendered. He laid down his newspaper, and began to talk to me of Italy: we soon were engaged in the recollections of the former time, and the contests of the day were for a moment forgotten.

Clarice sat at breakfast by her father; maintaining the conversation by her questions and inquiries, with a spirit and comprehension of the subject, that surprised as much as it delighted me. It was three years since we parted: how was she ripened and advanced under the care of that admirable Mrs. Fermor, whose quiet and indefatigable cares and instructions reminded me of the reiterated but gentle touches of old Time, in

the beautiful allegory of Addison. Certainly, she had brought her charge to a rare perfection. I observed, too, that Mrs. Fermor exerted herself far more than was her custom to assist in maintaining the flow of this fresh current of ideas. Mr. de Vere, far from being indifferent to his daughter, appeared to me to look upon her this morning with a tenderness that I had never before observed in him. Though far too reserved, and proud, to acknowledge the pleasure he took in all her affectionate attentions, he did feel them I am sure. Mrs. Fermor's eyes were filled with a delighted approbation as she looked at her.

For me!—alas! alas! Every fresh instance of her goodness, every fresh moment that I spent by her side, —only elevated what had been tender fondness, into an esteem, an admiration, beyond words: into a passion, intense as was my deeply fervent nature.

But did she? Would she love me?

Ah! that was the question?

Should I dare to put it to the proof? Should I, before Reginald could step in between me and the whole hope and happiness of my existence, should I not make one desperate effort to secure it?

I half resolved, that very day to end the intolerable suspense I was enduring. To throw myself at her feet, to plead for poor Edmund, with all the energy of a passion, which I felt could hardly be resisted by a heart so kind and tender. She already looked upon me as her friend, and sole confidant, and adviser. I would shelter her in my arms from the sorrow that seemed

gathering round her; I would save her from the fate which seemed awaiting her.

I was walking up and down the grass in front of the hall-door, thus musing and hesitating, when I saw Reginald's groom ride up.

As soon as he saw me, instead of going to the house he came up to me, and, touching his hat, delivered a letter from his master: then saying he was not directed to wait for an answer, he rode away.

I opened the letter; it was, of course, from Reginald.

"*Reginald to Edmund.*

"Dearest Edmund.

"Be it so—as I said when we parted last night. And yet I cannot understand you: your brow is clouded, your spirits depressed, I never saw man so changed.

"Why, if it be so, will you not confess? Confess, Edmund, and I leave this country to-morrow. I fly, while flight is yet in my power. Only say, 'Go,' and I am gone.

"Would I trifle with your happiness? Would I rob you of your treasure? No, dear Edmund, it is not yet too late....But one more such evening; and I will no longer answer for myself.

"Oh, Edmund!—but I am not going to rave. Sometimes I am satisfied that what you have taken such pains to make me believe, is indeed the truth, and all my suspicions without foundation.... Some times I am satisfied that so it is. How could you be so long, and so near, without flying to her feet? How, when I was forced to go into that stupid library with

Mr. de Vere—when the field was your own—when I expected to find you in a rapture at her side—you were walking alone in the garden, forsooth! when every instant, every golden moment, was so precious!

"Ah! Edmund. What an angel! What might she not make of me! of us! my dear old fellow, my dearest of Edmunds, united in equal affection, bound together for life!

"Ah, Edmund! say you don't love her—say you don't care for her. But if you do—*say it.*

"I swear to you, Edmund, it is not yet too late. I shall go away; I shall forget her. I am a rattlepated fellow, I shall forget her—but for thee! Ah, my Edmund! I know thee; this would strike deep with thee; —but if thou shouldst only love her with a brother's love, if thou hast been sincere!...

"Yet examine thyself well, my Edmund.

"I tell Jones not to wait for an answer; I repeat it, examine your own heart before you hastily give one.

"R. V."

A veil fell from before my eyes, and the whole reality of my position stood at once before me.

The evil I had so inadvertently occasioned in all its horrible extent, as deeply revealed by the hinted terrors of Clarice. The more than certainty of the peace and happiness which it was in the power of Reginald to bring with him into this family; the more than suspicion that even now the heart of Clarice did not view him with entire indifference; the conviction of his worth; the

humble opinion of my personal merits; and that speech of my father's,—"Let us not forget, Edmund, that if ever an opportunity for reparation should occur, a man of honour....."

All flashed upon my mind with a horrible distinctness. I stood as one before whose feet a gulph has suddenly opened, and swallowed up every thing he holds dear.

I comprehended the sacrifice that was demanded, and overpowered with the weight of my feelings, I could have fallen to the ground. It was with very great difficulty that I did prevent myself from falling, for I felt quite dizzy, and every object seemed swimming before my eyes, while my heart beat with a violence that almost stifled me.

To encounter any human creature in such a state was impossible. I plunged into a side plantation, and buried myself in the deepest wood. Here, surrounded by the closest thicket, I sat down.

I sat upon some stone steps that hung over what had once been an old stone quarry. Around me the pines and ash trees that had found root among the stones, sprang up with light shafts to the clear blue sky, and waved their pliant feathery branches to the whispering of the wind.

Oh! well is that scene imprinted on my memory; that scene of the death struggle of my expiring happiness. That scene which witnessed the more than mortal anguish with which, stretched upon the turf, the cold sweat welling from my brow, I rolled myself upon the dust and bit the ground in my agony. Well

do I remember that scene. Never shall I forget that hour.

The green, light branches waved above my head; the still lull of Nature on a day so beautiful, was round me; the wild birds were gently stirring the bushes; all was calm, and clear, and beautiful, but my soul was as dark as hell.

Was I called upon? and why was I called upon?

Was it my fault that Mr. de Vere had set so unreasonable a value upon this possession? Was it my fault that he had lost it? Was I not a mere instrument in the hand of that destiny which takes delight in entangling and frustrating all the best hopes and purposes of men? Was my happiness nothing, too? Why was my heart—why were my feelings, intense, far intenser than their own—to be sacrificed at the shrine of their happiness?

Every one for himself; and why was I not to take care of myself?

What Reginald said, was true. He could go; it was not yet too late for him. He would soon forget the transient impression, while I—!

No, not in this world—not in the next. So said my passionate heart. I never could, I never would forget her.

Was she not my own? Had I not loved her, tendered her, cherished her; since her little baby hands first patted poor Edmund's cheek? Why was I to become so exquisitely wretched? why and for what?

I would save myself. I would do that, for myself, that no one seemed inclined to do for me. It was what

every one owed to himself. It was like the duty of self-preservation, the duty which commands a man to preserve his own life. His life! it was ten thousand times more than life....

What business had my friend, what business had Reginald here? stepping in between me and my happiness. Reginald should go.

I rose from the earth comforted. I wiped the dew and dust from my face; I breathed again; I sat down upon a stone, the fierce panting of my heart was allayed. I looked round. I was more at ease.

Was I more at ease? Alas! no.

Who ever yet found ease in the resolutions of selfishness? There is a chill at the heart, there is a still, small voice, that will not, will not be appeased.

My imagination was perversely busy. I thought I was going mad. I saw her radiant with love and happiness, standing at the altar with Reginald; I saw her turn those once darkly, sorrowing, anxious eyes, now darkly sorrowful no more, upon her father. I saw him saved!.....

I saw her reigning at Mount Sorel, brilliant with youth and beauty: reigning in that sphere to which she so truly belonged, in the ancient house of her fathers. I saw Reginald.... I could not help seeing Reginald, the brave, the gay, the beautiful, the good. How sweet his smile, how bright his beaming eyes, how graceful his figure! How did she look at him, how he at her. And where was Edmund? poor, plain, heavy Edmund?

Oh! then my hands tore off large locks of my hair as I clenched them in my agony.

My ideas were all in confusion.

My ideas upon duty, as I have said, had been a good deal bewildered by the new doctrines I had learned. To resist oppression is a noble motive. To assert one's own personal rights, a more questionable one. What we call our *rights*, are often merely *claims*. And how easily do the claims of selfishness take the form of rights.

Every man had a right to be happy, was that I had learned; and a right to secure his own happiness.

'Let each think of every one's more than of his own.'

Such had not been the doctrine.

The generous law of Christian love was too much forgotten in our new philanthropic creed.

I revolted against the idea of sacrificing myself, as I should have done against an injustice to another.

To consider *their* best happiness, to weigh the best happiness of her I loved, against my own; I was too selfish for that. Yet despise me not too much. I was not a selfish being. I did *so* love her, I could *not* part with her.

Shall he go?

Write but that word; he asks no reasons, he calls for no explanation. Write the word and he is gone.... and the field is open to thee, and thou shallt have her heart, for it is more than half thine already. Didst thou not press unrebuked that hand this morning. Didst thou not almost hold her in thine arms, un-

blamed, as thou didst wipe the tears that fell fast upon her cheek. She shall be mine.

I had taken my determination at last; I rose from my seat, and with that sort of obstinacy, which we assume when we are not, after all, perfectly satisfied with our decision, I resolved to go directly to my room, write to Reginald, send off the letter at once, and thus put an end to all further uncertainty.

I was hastening through the wood when I heard the steps of some one approaching; I turned into a by-path to avoid the encounter; but this path leading, for a short way, by a more circuitous route, through the bushes, again joined the one I had quitted, and as I passed out of it, I suddenly startled upon my father.

"I am just arrived, Edmund," said he; "I was looking for you. But, what's the matter? How you falter? Your clothes are covered with dust; your hair is all in disorder; what has happened?"

"Oh! nothing, nothing, Sir!" said I, in a hurried manner, endeavouring to pass him. "Nothing at all. I have been prowling about in the quarries there; I fell down, that is all." He had been looking at me while I spoke; he now shook his head with an air of incredulity.

"You don't look very fit to be clambering about this morning, Edmund; but do not be quite in so great a hurry," as I was attempting to pass on. "I wanted to speak to you..... I have been at Mount Sorel this morning, and have learnt from our friend Higgins, that under your auspices, Reginald has found his way here already."

"Yes, I believe so," was my answer.

"You believe so! why, Edmund! Mr. Higgins says that you introduced him yourself, as, of course, you did; —and you did rightly and honourably, Edmund."

"Sir!"

"I saw much of Reginald Vernon," he continued, either not observing, or not choosing to appear to observe my emotion, "while we were at Paris together; he has a careless, volatile manner, but he is one of the most promising young men I know. You did very honourably, Edmund, perhaps generously," glancing at me, "in bringing him here. All may be right, yet."

I looked up at my father with a bewildered stare, but I was choaking and could not speak.

"I am not a match-maker, you well know, my son; but there are affairs of this kind, which no man of sense can look upon with indifference. This business of the estate has been, indeed, most unfortunate; and the hold it has taken upon De Vere's mind has been, I may confess it to you now, a source of very great uneasiness to me. It is strange that a man of so much firmness of temper, as I have ever found him upon other occasions, should have suffered himself to be unhinged to this degree, by a vexation of such a nature. But so it is .... I would not mention this to you before, Edmund; I hate to give unnecessary pain; but now, that you seem yourself to have hit upon a means by which all these vexatious mishaps may be set right, I will confess to you how serious have been my apprehensions."

"But, Sir! Mr. de Vere will never—"

"Never endure the thought of Mr. Higgins as the father-in-law of his daughter, do you mean?"

I went sick, I turned pale. There is something in the effect of having those ideas which possess the mind, bluntly embodied, as it were, in words, that overcomes one.

"Edmund! what is the matter? I hope, there is nothing on your side," said my father, with some sternness. "I did not perceive, but that you were quite as happy, and your spirits as good, as those of any one else, when you were abroad. I hope that there has nothing passed between you and Miss de Vere. I mean that the heart of Clarice is disengaged. This would be inflicting a double injury, Sir. I trust nothing has passed of this nature, between you; I warned you, and I sent you abroad, as I hoped in time."

"Nothing whatever," I faltered out; "for *her* it was quite in time."

"That is well," said my father, avoiding, as I thought, to look at me. "Edmund, yours is a generous and an honourable spirit. I am proud of you, my son; you have done wisely, kindly, and well. There are many difficulties, many prejudices, on all sides, to be overcome; but we shall, I hope, have the satisfaction of seeing that happiness restored, which we have been so unfortunately the means of disturbing. Have you seen Mr. de Vere? Is he gone towards the farm do you think?" And turning suddenly upon his heel, he walked away in that direction.

I stood as one petrified: I could not move: for some time, I could hardly breathe. Niobe turned to stone is the type of what I felt.

It was all over then. I staggered a few paces,

gasped painfully for a moment or two, and then fainted away.

How long I lay without consciousness I do not know; but when I opened my eyes, I found myself lying under a tree. My head had struck against the root as I fell, and was bleeding. I was stunned and confused; and it was some moments before I could recollect where I was, or what had happened.

I shall never forget the slow return of recollection, as one after another, the past circumstances arranged themselves in my memory. Oh! may none who read these lines ever know what it is to awaken, as I did, to consciousness by slow degrees; and by inches, as it were, arrive at the perception, that all they prized and loved in life is lost. May they never feel that sunless darkness sinking over their prospect, that sickly distaste for all things arising within them. The zest of life, the spring-tide of existence, for ever and ever departed.

What dreadful changes take place in the recesses of the heart, unmarked and unknown of any one. They do not make themselves understood; they have no words; they call for no sympathy; they seek not to be intelligible; but they act upon the secret springs of life, on the mysterious inner nature, on that which reflects the outer form of things—almost creates it—and the whole tone of existence is changed.

I lay long in this state: the excess of my misfortune seemed to stupify me; and the idea that my father had himself taken part against me, was the climax of my misfortune.

Had I made a generous sacrifice of my happiness, there would have been some consolation; something at least to raise me in my own esteem, and support me by the proud approbation of my heart. But no; my happiness was wrested from me, as it were, by force; I had not even the melancholy pleasure of surrendering it; I had not even the pitiable consolation of the sympathy of any living being. I saw that it was expected of me, to yield without repining; to suffer my all of happiness to be torn from me without a complaint. I was not to utter a cry while my heart-strings were being rent asunder. I was to be dumb, uncomplaining. I was not to disturb the serenity of others by my lamentations .... every one's happiness was to be considered but mine.

But I will have done.

See me pale, stupid, my face covered with blood, my clothes defiled with dust, *defaite*, *degradée*. Have the French then more feeling than we have, that in their language I can alone find words to describe the miserable man, who, walking slowly and with difficulty, reached the house; stole unperceived up the stairs; entered his room; and flung himself upon his bed.

There, recollection again altogether forsook me; and I remained insensible for several days.

CHAPTER XX.

Either disperse these mists, which blot and fill
My perspective still as they do pass,
Or else remove me hence unto that hill
Where I shall need no glass. VAUGHAN.

EDMUND did not appear at dinner.

"Where is your master, George?" said Mr. Lovel. "Go up into his room, and tell him that Mr. de Vere has sat down to dinner."

George obeyed, and going up stairs, knocked at the door; receiving no answer, he ventured gently to open it, and looking in, saw his master in his morning dress, flung across the bed, and, as he thought, asleep.

He went up to him, and gently pushing him by the shoulder, "Sir, sir," he said, "dinner is ready."

A low, indistinct groan, was the only answer.

The face was uncovered, and the head thrown back over the pillow; the eyes were open and staring; and the cheeks stained with blood.

Excessively frightened, the man ran down stairs, and opening the dining-room door said, in a very agitated manner,

"Please, Sir, you're wanted. Will you please to come up stairs. I think Mr. Edmund's ill."

Clarice started from her chair; but Mrs. Fermor rose, and said:

"Sit still, my dear; I will go with Mr. Lovel, and see what is the matter."

Much alarmed, Mr. Lovel hastened up stairs, Mrs. Fermor following. They found Edmund lying across the bed; as if he had flung himself down, and immediately lost his sensibility. One of his arms was stretched out, as if he had fallen with a certain violence; his head was hanging back; and he was breathing heavily.

The father, excessively alarmed, lifted up the head, and endeavoured to place it in a less painful position; while Mrs. Fermor hurried away for salts and cold water; they applied the stimulant to his nostrils; they flung the cold water over his face; they bathed his temples profusely. He began to move his eyes, and the breathing was less heavy; but, though he seemed in some degree to recover consciousness, it was evident that he was not sensible of the presence of any one. His father spoke to him, once or twice, but received no answer.

He lay with a fixed, glassy stare, gazing, as it would seem, at vacancy: presently the lids closed, but whether in sleep, or that he was again relapsing into insensibility, it was impossible to discover.

"Send for a surgeon, for Heaven's sake, immediately," whispered Mr. Lovel to Mrs. Fermor. "What can be the cause of this?"

"He seemed very ill yesterday at dinner, and com-

plained of a violent headach, but appeared better this morning," returned she.

"He was ill yesterday at dinner, you say," reiterated the father, evidently in some degree relieved by the intelligence; "this looks like the first symptom of a violent fever. We must have help immediately."

Mrs. Fermor left the room.

Mr. Lovel took Edmund's hand.

"Speak to me, Edmund; speak to me, my son; what is the matter?"

Edmund opened his eyes, gazed in a dreamy, unnatural manner into his father's face, and giving a low groan, pressed his other hand faintly to his side.

"Are you in pain, Edmund? Is it your heart? Where is it? What is it? Speak to me, Edmund, speak to me, for Heaven's sake."

His lips moved, and he muttered inarticulately; then gave one other dreamy, inexpressive stare, and closed his eyes again. He still pressed his hand to his heart.

The father looked at him with great anxiety, and sorrowfully shook his head.

"Can it be possible? poor fellow!" said he to himself. "Can I have been so blind to the intensity of his feelings? Yet she said he was complaining yesterday."

"Edmund! my boy! recollect yourself. It is your father."

But he only faintly groaned.

By this time, the rumour of Edmund's illness had reached the dining-room; Mr. and Mrs. de Vere both hurried up stairs, followed by Clarice; who, not ven-

turing to enter the room, stood, with beating heart, at the door; listening to every sound in breathless anxiety.

Mr. Lovel stepped out.

"Will you come in, Miss de Vere?" he said. "Will you speak to Edmund? Perhaps your kind voice may recall him to recollection."

She came into the room; her father and mother, and Mrs. Fermor, were standing round the bed, looking anxiously at the insensible figure stretched before them.

"Speak to him, Miss de Vere," said Mr. Lovel.

"Where is he? what is the matter? Oh, Edmund!" cried she, bursting into tears. "Dear Edmund, what is the matter with you?"

She took his hand, which lay stretched out upon the counterpane.

"Speak to me, Edmund, speak to me. Good heavens! What is the matter with you, Edmund?"

But the hand she grasped was suddenly withdrawn, and such a universal shivering agitated the whole form, that the bed shook under him.

"This will never do," said Mrs. Fermor, with resolution. "Come away, Clarice. He must be kept perfectly quiet till the doctor arrives."

Clarice was now weeping bitterly; she obeyed Mrs. Fermor, and silently left the room.

Dismay was painted upon every countenance. The father stood at the bottom of the bed gazing upon the convulsed and shivering form before him, with an expression of the deepest terror and perplexity. Mrs. de Vere had her handkerchief to her eyes. Mrs. Fermor

and nurse were busily employed endeavouring to afford some relief. At length the doctor appeared.

The little fat man came bustling in with a look of great importance, examined his patient, and shook his head.

"Congestion of the brain. Bleed him immediately. Hold that arm, Mrs. Nurse, while I bandage, &c. &c."

The father, without speaking, moved to the bedside, held his son's arm, and assisted, with unshaking hand, in applying the bandage.

The blood started with violence from the incision, and rose like a fountain to the top of the room. Violent convulsions succeeded, the body was almost thrown off the bed by the desperate paroxysm. Mrs. de Vere ran shrieking from the room; Mr. de Vere followed her. The father, still unsubdued, remained to assist the doctor and Mrs. Fermor in the application of the necessary remedies.

At length the desperate agitation of the blood and nerves subsided. The blood ceased to flow; the exhausted patient became calm; his eyes closed, and he seemed disposed to sleep.....

Mrs. Fermor and nurse sat down to watch; the father followed the doctor out of the room.

"What is your opinion of the case, doctor?" was the first anxious question.

"Bad—bad—very bad. Incipient fever! many such cases this summer. Worst I have seen."

"Fever!" cried Mr. Lovel. "You say you have seen cases like this during the summer."

"Very general—heat of the harvest—causes obscure

—symptoms alarming—danger great—not equally great in all cases—quiet—anodynes—sleep."

"Do you consider my son in danger, then?"

"Not yet—may be to-morrow—mayn't be to-morrow—return early in the morning—good evening, Sir."

"You say," said Mr. Lovel, detaining him, "that you have seen other cases of a similar character this summer."

"Have done so—very many—termination rarely fatal. Quiet and anodynes—send up medicines by boy—good evening, Sir."

And away went the whimsical little man of art.

It was as if a mountain had been removed from Mr. Lovel's breast. The disordered state in which he had found his son on meeting him in the wood that morning; the blood-shot, starting eyes, the dishevelled hair, the heated countenance; were now accounted for. And the impression which the doctor had conveyed, was confirmed by the report of the intense headach under which he had appeared to labour the day before. We willingly credit that which we wish to believe. For once Mr. Lovel's penetration was at fault. He attributed to epidemic fever the strange agitation he had witnessed.

An anxious and tender father, uniting in himself those duties of both parents which are too often but indifferently fulfilled by either—Mr. Lovel watched by his son's bedside.

There he might be seen, standing by his pillow, gazing intently upon his son.

He had suspected that something of the nature of an attachment had been formed between his son and Clarice; but the depth and passion of Edmund's character was so completely veiled under his homely, and somewhat robust proportions, that it had escaped even the penetration of Mr. Lovel. Certain that his son, in spite of his handsome though not large fortune, and respectable family, would never be one on whom the haughty and ambitious Mr. de Vere would look with satisfaction as a son-in-law; and too dignified, and too wise to choose that his Edmund should enter a family as a tolerated rather than a valued inmate; he had determined, as we have seen, to send him abroad in order to direct his mind to fresh objects, and interrupt, for the present, an intercourse, which, he began to suspect, might in time become dangerous.

He had observed, with great pleasure, the alacrity with which Edmund had embraced the proposal. On meeting him at Paris, he was gratified by witnessing the cheerful, and wholesome spirits of his son, and the enthusiasm with which he embraced those subjects now so generally interesting. Edmund seemed absorbed in politics, and devoted to Mr. Higgins and his clique. There was not the slightest symptom, by which to detect the anxious lover; so sedulously had Edmund, from pride, delicacy, and shyness united, shrouded his secret from every eye!

Mr. Lovel, on learning from Mr. Higgins that morning, when he called at Mount Sorel, that Edmund had taken Reginald with him, the day before, to dine at Holnicote, had received the impression we have seen.

He believed that Edmund had purposely introduced his friend to Mr. de Vere's family; in hopes, by this means, to afford the only compensation which could possibly be offered for the injury he had so innocently done.

He was pleased, upon every account, at this conduct on the part of his son; and though aware of the force of Mr. de Vere's prejudices, still he knew—no one better—how easy it is to modify prejudice, by self-interest: prejudice, which is in general only a form under which men veil, and justify to themselves and to others, the indulgence of their own evil passions. It is principle, alone, by which a man may be expected to abide, in contradiction to his interests and his wishes. But where is the principle to be found, which regulates such irrational aversions as those entertained by Mr. Higgins and Mr. de Vere?

Such had been Mr. Lovel's reflections. But now, as he sat by the bed side of his son, who, sunk into an uneasy slumber, lay before him; his countenance still contracted with the expression of intense pain; he asked himself, whether, in the hidden affections of that reserved and embarrassed man, a depth and a force might not exist, upon which he had never calculated. If incipient fever had in a great measure occasioned these dreadful bodily agitations, might not mental distress have aggravated them to their late frightful intensity?

And if so, what should he do? What course pursue? And above all, what was the part demanded by honour?

Could he with honour retract what he had lately said; and, instead of recommending, or rather demanding, a sacrifice on the part of his son perhaps beyond his

power to make, should he allow matters to take their natural course; and concealing his own suspicions of the state in which affairs really stood, allow Mr. de Vere to bestow his daughter upon Edmund, in ignorance that a proposal so far more in accordance with his views and wishes, would be by this means prevented; and the coveted inheritance thus, a third time, lost to his family?

Like most other men of his years, the state of the young lady's affections, a matter in fact so intimately connected with the real rights and wrongs of this question, Mr. Lovel seems never to have adverted to. What was due to the father's claims, occupied too much his attention. Had he reflected, as he ought to have reflected, that the happiness of Clarice was the main consideration in such a question; that with Clarice the final decision ought to rest; he would have been spared much of his present perplexity.

CHAPTER XXI.

> Where thou dost shine darkness looks white and fair,
> Storms turn to music, clouds to smiles and air.
>
> VAUGHAN.

IN the meantime Reginald had returned home, as much in love as a young man of his ardent temper may be supposed to be, who, already deeply interested in the fate of a lovely young creature, beheld, when he saw the fair reality, one of the most charming girls in existence.

Gay as was his temper, and fervent as was his imagination, Reginald united to these qualities a very pure and delicate heart. His ideas of love were chivalric, his notions of female worth high, and he was singularly exacting in what he demanded, before he surrendered that treasure of affection which he felt himself capable of bestowing. Of all his many friends and acquaintance, Edmund alone had, till now, been truly beloved.

Quick and discerning, Reginald easily detected all the numerous flaws and stains that impaired the character of the other youths of his acquaintance, gifted with

external qualities so far more brilliant and attractive. In Edmund alone he found a thoroughly sterling character, a sincere, faithful, honest heart. Among so much of tinsel, so much of mere outward plating, he alone rang sound. Others might have, and had, a thousand good and pleasant qualities, and he liked them, more or less, accordingly; Edmund alone was, as the French say, *tout rond;* Edmund alone had his perfect and entire esteem, his perfect and entire confidence; he loved Edmund devotedly.

It is usually the case, in this world, that the more slow and passive character shall be the devoted slave of him of bright talents and fervid genius. It was not so here. Such is the power of genuine moral worth, that Reginald, with all his brilliant qualities, honoured the slower Edmund as his superior; yielded to him, made way for him, considered him, referred to him, as one in every respect to be estimated far more highly than himself.

Edmund loved Reginald well, but not with equal intensity; his heart was absorbed by his passion for Clarice, and could with difficulty admit any other very strong feeling. His political enthusiasm alone, which, as we have seen, sprang from the most generous instincts of his nature, might be said to vie with his love as a passion; but then, it was a passion of so totally different a nature, as to be found not incompatible with the deepest devotion of the heart to one individual of the sex. We have seen it so, in a thousand instances.

Reginald came home from his visit very much in love, and, moreover, so charmed with all that he had seen;

so pleased with the elegance and fine order of Mr. de Vere's system of life; with that inexpressible, unattainable something, which belongs, or ought to belong, to long-descended habits of retirement; he had felt himself so much more in his element with the finished politeness of Mr. de Vere, than with his obstreperous, clever, rough, democratical father; that the tender wish he had in a sort of romantic manner fostered, to be the means of replacing the sole heiress of the De Veres in the house of her fathers, had become a very real, earnest desire to obtain this lovely creature for his wife.

What airy castles of happiness were soon erected in his busy brain! What charming, yet what rational plans of life, did this lively, but good and sensible young man, invest with all the bright colouring of a fervent heart and brilliant fancy! A sort of magnetic instinct had told him, almost at a glance, what the character of his Clarice really was; he had divined in those lustrous, but clouded eyes, in that slightly mournful brow, in those expressive and ever-varying features, all the sensibility and all the tenderness of her character. They had not talked much, but enough had passed to convince him that she possessed an intellect of no common order. The way in which she responded to his ideas, the quickness of her perceptions, had assisted to win his heart; and to her, the lady of his love, was he, as some faithful knight of old, ready to offer the devotion of a life.

But Edmund?....

In spite of all Edmund could do, or say, or did do

or say, he could not altogether allay the suspicion, still lurking in Reginald's mind, that he, himself, must love Clarice .... could not but love Clarice. At times, when he recollected Edmund's proceedings; so entirely the reverse of what he felt his own would have been, under the influence of that passion now beating in his breast; he was led to hope, that the attachment which evidently existed between him and Clarice, was of that domestic nature which usually results from the relations of early infancy, and rarely assumes a more intense character. And then, again, a something in Edmund's manner, would awaken the most painful doubts and hesitations.

On his return from Holnicote, he passed an agitated and restless night. It was the first time, perhaps, in his life, that his happy pillow had been visited by anxiety or care. The struggle with himself, with his own wishes, schemes, and passions, was severe; but truth and friendship prevailed. He felt that the field was, of right, to Edmund; he felt, that where Edmund loved, it would be with no common love. His soul revolted from the thought of supplanting one, himself so sincere and honourable; his heart bled at the idea of the anguish of his friend.

The heart of Reginald triumphed over all those internal debates, those suggestions of self-love, those vain casuistical pleadings, which perplex the court of conscience, when the inclinations of a man, and his sense of what is just and right, are at variance. Over all it triumphed. And like a good and wise man, distrustful of himself, he immediately, upon taking his re-

solution, wrote and despatched his first letter to Edmund.

After he had sent his letter, and thus thrown the arbitration of his fate into Edmund's hands, the impatience with which he awaited his answer was almost insupportable. He could not endure the society of his father, whose somewhat broad jests were not spared upon the subject of Reginald's visit, and of its result,—his grave and troubled looks. He avoided his friends; and passed the whole of the day, wandering in that portion of the woods which hung over the stream, which, as he had lately learned, separated his father's estate from the woods of Holnicote.

Here, seated under a tree, at the foot of that little wooden bridge which Mr. de Vere had so often passed in secret, and which crossed the bright, pebbly, dancing stream, did Reginald sit, chewing that cud of sweet and bitter fancy—the favourite food of lovers.

It was not until his watch told him that it was four o'clock, that he returned home to dinner.

"Any letters?" said he, as he met a man servant, crossing the hall; "any letters for me?"

"No, Sir; the post does not come in till to-morrow morning."

"No letters, by a private hand?"

"No, Sir."

It was not, perhaps, very kind of Edmund, thought he, not to relieve this almost intolerable state of uncertainty; but, then, he had himself told him to pause, and to consider well of his answer.

He was then, hesitating—

Ah, then, he loved her!

"Why, Reginald," cried Mr. Higgins, when, with a slow step and troubled countenance, he opened the dining-room door, "why, Reginald! Hey dey! what's the matter now? Art bewitched? Look at him, Wickham! Carlton! all of you. Are his hose ungartered? Is his shoe latchet undone?.... Hair out of order, and all the other signs of love, the poor moon-struck fellow undoubtedly hath—"

"Ha! ha!" all laughed.

Reginald, whose good-humour and forbearance was proof against small provocations, for he was resolved to tolerate every thing from the father he loved and honoured, laughed a little, and said,

"I did not know, Sir, that you were such an observer of the vain refinements of the toilette; I thought you rather liked that men should contemn such idle matters. I will take better care to be *point de vice*, another day. Wickham, give me some beef."

He took it upon his plate; eat it he could not.

"I sent the hue and cry after thee as far as the Bevis wood," continued the father, "and nowhere wert thou to be found. Here has been Mr. Lovel on his way to Holnicote, and he will insist, that grand pacificator, that I have done very well to let thee go to visit De Vere; and he talks of bringing the high and puissant Ralph de Vere, over here, to pay his devoirs to the Lord of Mount Sorel. Well, be it so, lads! the old aristocrat shall be welcome to the temple of liberty. Heigh! Shall we march him up the avenue to the tune of 'Ca ira.'"

"We'll teach the old fellow a new tune or two, if we once catch him among us, let us alone for that," cried one.

"We'll 'vive le Roi—vive la nation' him," cried another.

"I hope, gentlemen," said Reginald, with a little warmth in his manner, "that if Mr. de Vere does my father the honour to call upon him, we shall see him treated with the respect due to his position in society, and with the politeness which *used* to be the fashion in all civilised societies."

"Heyday, my young one! Frighten not thy sage self. I shall pay proper respect to every drop of rascally Norman blood that flows through his right honourable veins."

"Whatever *you* do, Sir, will be done as it ought to be done .... no doubt of it," said Reginald. "I beg these young gentlemen's pardon for my hint, which, certainly, was intended only for them."

The young men began to murmur and look cross; they liked to say whatever they pleased themselves; they hated plain-speaking in others.

"Why, Reginald," said Wickham, "what an aristocrat you are. Do you think nobody knows how to behave themselves but the luxury-cradled minions of courts? I'd have you to know—"

"Oh!" said Reginald, "I have it by rote—that 'worth makes the man, the want of it the fellow,' and as there cannot be the slightest question as to the intrinsic worth of every one of *us*, the consequence is plain."

"Too bad," said they; "what do you mean?"

"Oh! nothing at all, but that we are so much wiser and better than all the rest, we have a right to treat all the rest with *sovereign* contempt."

"And will," cried they.

"And shall," responded he.

So they skirmished; lightly they skirmished; for the admirable temper of Reginald, who stood alone to offer the slightest shadow of an opposition to their self-constituted power of deciding, without appeal, upon every question, prevented discussion from degenerating into bitterness or animosity. But what a period was that, when almost every hearth in England rang with the noise of domestic contentions! When father was against son, and mother against daughter; the father-in-law against his son-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law!

How could it be otherwise? Such arrogant dogmatism on the *liberal* side, such unyielding obstinacy on the other. There is no help for it in such cases; men must fight it out, and the battle, accordingly, *was* fought round every table in England, Scotland, France, and Ireland.

The post came in the next morning.

Still no letter.

What could be the meaning of this?

Reginald wrote again.

"Now, Edmund, I must say, for the first time in my life, that you are unkind. If your feelings are such as I suspect, you should have some consideration for mine.

If they are not, why not relieve my suspense, and make me happy at once. To stay or go? One syllable is enough.

"If I receive no answer to this, I come. R. V."

He sent this letter also by his groom, and told him to wait for an answer.

The man returned in about an hour. No answer.

He had sent up the letter and inquired whether there was any answer. The boy had come back and said, there was none. Master Edmund was not well.

"There is some strange mystery or misunderstanding here," said Reginald, to himself; and he resolved to ride over to Holnicote the next day.

END OF VOL. I.

C. WHITING, BEAUFORT HOUSE, STRAND.

MOUNT SOREL;

OR,

THE HEIRESS OF THE DE VERES.

MOUNT SOREL;

OR,

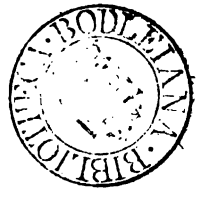
THE HEIRESS OF THE DE VERES.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF THE

"TWO OLD MEN'S TALES."

"She lived within her father's halls,
Beside the streams of Dove;
A maid, whom there were none to praise,
And very few to love."



IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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1845.

C. WHITING, BEAUFORT HOUSE, STRAND.

MOUNT SOREL.

CHAPTER I.

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought,
I summon up remembrance of things past;
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes new wail my dear times' waste.

SHAKSPEARE.

CLARICE was seated in the oriel window of the breakfast-room at Holnicote, busy with her embroidery-frame. She was alone. Mrs. de Vere had just left the apartment; Mrs. Fermor was with her patient up-stairs.

Edmund still remained in the same state. He breathed and he moved, it is true, and swallowed what medicines were administered to him, but the pressure upon the brain continued. A brain-fever was apprehended, and he was kept in darkness and stillness.

Clarice was not allowed to visit him again. Often did the affectionate girl creep to his door, and listen for the voice of him she so tenderly loved; but, save the hushed noises of a sick room, all was silent.

She had but lately come down-stairs, and she was sitting alone at her work, mournfully ruminating upon Edmund's probable danger. Not the slightest idea of the nature of his feelings towards herself had once entered her mind; filled with the sincerest, but most perfectly sisterly affection, she interpreted every demonstration of feeling on his part, by her own. She entirely believed in the doctor's theory of the fever; and mourned over his danger, as over that of the dearest of brothers.

At times, as her rapid needle passed through her canvass, from which she never lifted up her head, other visions would mix with her reveries.

He had not then come again! He had promised to return, but he had never appeared. Had he only visited Holnicote in acquiescence with Edmund's wishes, or in polite compliance with her father's invitation? How very wrong and foolish to think so often of him!

Poor Clarice! In vain did she school that wrong and foolish heart of hers. It would obstinately flutter—go forward—go back again—every time she heard the doctor's horse upon the gravel road. It never would believe that the doctor's horse it was.

Thus she was sitting when the doctor's horse was again heard upon the gravel road, and there was a ring at the hall door. "This time," said her heart, "I will not be so foolish. It always *is* the doctor's horse."

"It always is only the doctor's horse," said her heart.

The door opened. "Master is in his room," said the footman. "I will go and tell him, Sir."

Reginald walked in, and the man shut the door.

She rose hastily from her seat; she made two steps

forward to meet him; then colouring up to the eyes, and muttering something, she knew not what, she retreated again.

His confusion was as great as her own; his colour as high, his voice as confused and inarticulate.

"Mr. de Vere—Edmund—at home," was all she could have heard, could she have heard any thing; but a rushing sound was in her ears, and her senses were all in confusion.

He was far too young, and too true; too much fluttered, too much agitated by his own feelings; to draw all the flattering conclusions that might have been formed from her manner.

She had resumed her place; a chair was standing at the opposite side of the embroidery frame. He did not wait to be invited, he sat down there.

Then he could see as she bent her head down, the crimson, rosy colour flashing over her cheeks and forehead. He stammered—he hesitated—he did not know what to say. He wished himself a thousand miles off—he would not have been any where but where he was for the universe.

All this, however, was but the affair of a few moments. Their instinctive sense of delicacy and propriety struggled against this confusion of feeling; she raised her head; he was intently looking at her; they both tried to speak at the same moment.

"I had the honour to call—I heard Edmund was ill," said Reginald. "I hope I do not disturb you."

"Oh! not in the least; Edmund—poor Edmund! He is, I fear, very, very ill."

"Is it possible?" cried Reginald, "very ill—Edmund! How! When?"

"I remember the terrible headache he complained of, the day you dined here: it was the first symptom, the latter days of fever, which must have been coming on for some days."

"A fever in the brain," cried Reginald, with a sudden accent of joy.

Clarice looked at him with astonishment.

"It is a very dangerous fever," said she, somewhat reprovingly. "It has been very common this summer in the neighbourhood: and many—many—" she shook her head and looked sorrowfully down at her work.

But it would not do: a mountain was removed from Reginald's breast. This, then, accounted for all—Edmund was ill: the headache was not a pretence, and the irritation of his manner had proceeded from rising fever; the feelings he professed were genuine; the nature of the affection he felt for Clarice, his contentment and happiness while abroad, his indifference on his return, all was consistent.

His abstraction of mind, while he revolved all these circumstances, struck Clarice; she raised her head, and could not help looking at him. After a few moments, however, he recovered himself; he bent over to her, as she sat at her work, and, in a low voice, began to talk to her of Edmund.

"He is not *very* seriously ill, however, I trust," he said.

"I do not know what to fear: he has been insensible ever since yesterday evening."

She, then, working, while he bending forward watched her as she passed her needles through her work, related to him all that had happened.

She had a subject now, and she could speak upon that with the simplicity and a certain agreeableness peculiar to her. He listened, riveted to the place where he sat; while she, with feelings till then unknown, talked and looked, and bent her head to her work, and lifted her eyes again to his face; all with gentle innocence so bewitching, a softness so infectious! . . . .

How long they had been there they neither of them knew; nor do I. All I know is, that this half or three quarters of an hour did the work of years.

At last the door opened, and Mr. de Vere entered.

Reginald started up, went forward to meet him, and managed to go through the common forms of politeness with tolerable composure; but Mr. de Vere returned his civilities with a certain distrust and reserve, and a distant coldness, which astonished him; and struck chill to the heart of Clarice, as, lifting her eyes furtively from her work, she anxiously and silently observed them.

"I am shocked to find that Edmund is so ill," at last Reginald said, as anxious now to escape as he had been before to arrive: the unexpected and inexplicable change in Mr. de Vere's manner chilling him most disagreeably.

"Ring the bell, Clarice," said her father.

She rose to obey. Reginald rushed forward to prevent her. Their eyes met, and they both coloured crimson.

"Let Mr. Lovel be informed that Mr. Vernon is here," said Mr. de Vere to the footman who entered, "to inquire after Mr. Edmund."

"May I venture up-stairs?" said Reginald; and, without waiting for permission, he followed the footman.

Up-stairs they went; the door of the room was shut; Reginald knocked lightly, and receiving no answer, opened it, and beheld his friend!

There he lay, pale as death, his brow slightly contracted, as if by suffering, that seemed in some strange manner to be felt in spite of the external insensibility.

"Edmund!" cried Reginald, turning almost as pale as the deathlike figure before him. "Edmund!"

A low "hush," from Mrs. Fermor, with her finger upon her lips, was the only answer. Mr. Lovel, who was sitting by the head of the bed, his eyes fixed upon his son, looked up, and pointed to a chair by the bed-side; Reginald obeyed, and sat mournfully down by his friend. He had not paid very great attention to the recital of Clarice; he had been too much absorbed by his own sweet reverie, as he watched those slender fingers at their work; he had not realised the situation in which she had described Edmund as lying. He had been, indeed, too happy in the belief that this illness arose from a physical cause, to think very seriously of any thing else. His grief and surprise were excessive.

He gazed at that homely, but sincere and open countenance, now overspread with a black unearthly shadow; on the clenched hands that lay motionless upon the counterpane; and tears, strangers to the glad

eyes of Reginald, fell fast and heavy as he leaned over the bed.

Edmund! kind, excellent Edmund! The man he so tenderly loved, and so truly honoured; the object of so much playful raillery; the revered of his inmost heart; the straightforward, manly, stalwart Edmund; he of the strong dimensions, the well-knit limbs; the man of powerful thews and sinews; he lay stretched before him, powerless as a new-born infant! Long did Reginald sit gazing at his friend; but Edmund moved not; he breathed, and that was all.

The shades of evening now began to darken the apartment; and nurse entering, shading a candle with her hand, Reginald started from his reverie. He rose, wrung Mr. Lovel's hand, and whispering, "I must come again to-morrow to see how he is," stole quietly out of the room.

As he opened the door softly, he saw Clarice, already dressed for dinner, descending the stairs which terminated the gallery; he was by her side in a moment.

"How do you find him?" said she.

He shook his head mournfully; the ready tears stood in her eyes.

"You think him so very ill?" said she at last.

"Ah, Miss de Vere! what shall we do without our Edmund?"

We! it was the first time that word had passed between them—that tender expressive word of union.

"Dear Edmund!" repeated she, softly.

"He was the best! the kindest! the most generous

fellow upon earth!" cried Reginald. "What can have occasioned this horrible attack?"

"He seemed pretty well in the morning," said Clarice; "we sat together nearly an hour in the hermitage, and he was just as usual; all kindness as he ever was."

"I must leave you, Miss de Vere," said Reginald, as he entered the hall. "May I venture to come to-morrow to visit Edmund—indeed," interrupting himself, "I *must* come. I would not pass a day without seeing him while he lies in his present state, for the universe!"

She made no reply; he took her fair hand, raised it, pressed it to his lips, turned away, and was gone.

Dinner had been already announced, and she went straight into the dining-room.

The servants were in waiting. Mr. de Vere was there alone, pacing backwards and forwards in his usual gloomy manner. As soon as she entered he turned round, looked at her with a sort of interrogative air, but did not speak.

"He is gone," said she, gently.

"The association is hateful to me! Of all people upon earth, those men, one should think, might have the delicacy to abstain from visiting here! Sit down to dinner, Clarice. Where is your mother?"

"She is coming, Sir. She begged you would not wait."

"Have you told Mr. Lovel?"—to his butler.

"George is gone, Sir."

Mr. Lovel, accompanied by Mrs. Fermor, now entered the room; Mrs. de Vere appeared soon after, and they sat down to dinner.

As soon as Mr. Lovel entered the room, Mr. de Vere seemed to make an effort to shake off his gloomy abstraction, and inquired kindly after the health of his son.

"No change at present in any way. The doctor gives me hopes for to-morrow. I took a liberty with your house, De Vere. I authorised young Vernon to come again to-morrow. I never saw one poor fellow more affected at the fate of another... That, really, is an excellent young man, De Vere."

"So I believe," was the concise answer.

"De Vere," said Mr. Lovel, when the servants had withdrawn, "I am hesitating whether I will not now venture to renew a subject which has cost me already some pain. Why, may I ask you frankly, do you seem inclined to indulge an aversion foreign to the usual urbanity of your temper, against this very amiable son of my good friend Higgins?"

A dark, menacing look passed across Mr. de Vere's haughty features; but he said nothing.

"Is it reasonable? or is it like yourself?...I beg your pardon, ten thousand times; but suffer me this once, De Vere....What has this young man done? Nay, what has his father done, that the common cordiality of good neighbourhood should not exist between you?"

"We have all our sympathies, and our aversions," said Mr. de Vere, coldly; "and I don't think myself bound to associate with a man I don't like, because he

pleases to come and plant himself just under my nostrils. I would rather, Lovel," he continued, "that you would call another subject. Neither the young man, nor his father, can expect, or ought to expect, to be particularly welcome in my house."

"I thought you had been pleased with the manners of the young man, at least," persisted Mr. Lovel.

"I was. He is a fine and intelligent young man. But, spare me, Lovel—there are subjects and associations too painful.... Spare me upon this."

He sighed deeply; he did not often indulge himself, even in a demonstration of feeling such as this. Mr. Lovel looked at him, but said no more, and soon after quitted the room.

The evening passed on in its usual monotonous manner; Clarice sat at her embroidery frame; but the chair that had been placed opposite to it still stood there. She was no longer alone.

There *would* be a to-morrow; and he said he *must* come and see Edmund.

"They must all want common sense," cried Mr. Higgins, when, about six o'clock, Reginald returned and related his melancholy history. "What can they be about? Do they trust the life of that fine fellow to the old fool Peters? Why, he knows about as much of médicine as I do of the black art—an old pedantic dotard! Are they all bewitched? They sadly want a little common sense among their stupid formal heads.

You say you shall go over to-morrow, Reginald. I will ride with you. I'm not going to sacrifice a friend—a lad like Edmund—to their stupid etiquette and nonsense. I will ride with you, Reginald; and see what they are all about. I didn't think Lovel was such a fool."

"I am the fool," cried Reginald. "Why could I not suggest, what I suppose, Sir, you mean—that they should have advice from London, from Worcester, from Shrewsbury, from any of the large towns. . . . No time ought to be lost. Had I not better ride over again to-night, and speak to Mr. Lovel upon the subject? I could go myself; I could ride post. Give me a morsel of dinner, John;" turning to the man who entered the room; "I will merely change my dress and cool myself a little, and be off again."

"Thou *art* a good-natured fellow, Reginald," said Mr. Higgins, eyeing him with great satisfaction. "There is a little more of the coxcomb about thee, to be sure, than I quite like; but when any thing is to be *done*, give me a man with thy fine energies;" and he slapped him heartily on the shoulder as he spoke.

Reginald looked up at his father, and his bright eye was brighter as he said,

"Thank you heartily, Sir; a word of approbation from you is the pleasantest thing that ever happens to me. But will they never bring this dinner?"

Mr. Higgins rang the bell impatiently, and the servant soon appeared carrying in the huge and somewhat slovenly remains of that day's repast. But Reginald was in no humour to be fastidious; he sat down and

hastily supplied himself with food; his heart, in spite of all his anxieties, was dancing within him.

"I shall ride over myself, to-morrow," said Mr. Higgins, "and see Lovel. I think my visit may do him good. He's a brave man, and always master of himself; —there is not much demonstration about him; but he's as great a fool to the full, as I am, about his son. And no wonder. Edmund is a rare chap. In the meantime, Reginald, carry him this advice as from me; tell him to send, without an hour's delay, for better help—tell him I say Peters is a dolt and a fool."

"I'm off," cried Reginald, springing up. "I will just run up-stairs, wash my hands, and take off this dusty coat. Order James," turning to the servant, "to bring the grey mare round, and to follow me with my great coat upon the roan. Tell him I may possibly be out all night."

"Thy coat will do well enough, man," said his father. "Another slice of this sirloin of beef will do thee more good than all thy frippery."

"It will refresh me, Sir," cried he.

He sprang up-stairs two steps at a time, hurried into his room, pulled out all the drawers upon the floor in his impatience, selected another and as if by instinct a most becoming riding-dress, donned it, and was down almost before his father was aware that he was gone.

He came in, looking so eager, so animated, so radiant, so handsome, searching for his hat, and with a new pair of gloves in his hand,

"Well, lad!" his father could not help exclaiming, "thou *art* the very handsomest jackanapes I ever set my eyes upon; pity thou art such a confounded puppy.

Why, wherefore must thou put on a spic and span new dress to ride a couple of miles in a dark night. Well, well, I'm not going to quarrel with thee for that, nor for any other thing just at this moment. Off with you."

Mr. Higgins watched him through the window as he sprung upon his horse, and rode off, the very model of fine horsemanship.

The father turned from the window with an air of quiet satisfaction, saying to himself,

"Faith! I love to make a jest of him, and he bears it all with a right good temper. Steel to the back-bone is that lad. There's not one of them, not one of all those fine spirited boys on the other side the water, not one of those puppies I have got dangling after me here—fit to hold the candle to him."

Happy of heart did Reginald ride away. To be obliged to return that very evening! Let any one who has ever known what true love is, recall the invincible attraction that hangs round one enchanted spot: the rending pain with which we part from it, and the inexpressible delight of the return.

Then the suggestions of his father had given him new life and hope as regarded his friend. With the sanguine temper of his age, he anticipated nothing but immediate relief from the advice of some one more experienced than the present doctor, and his gay fancy decked the future in the brightest colours. Edmund restored, all doubts and suspicions at an end, and his Clarice his own!

A ring at the bell startled Clarice, who happened to be sitting alone with her father, in the drawing-room.

The hall door was heard to open—hasty steps followed—the lock of the drawing-room door turned, and Reginald appeared. There was a start of surprise. The too ready blushes flew again over the face of Clarice, while her eyes sparkled with a pleasure that could not be concealed.

He came in with such a charming, open, disengaged air, all the shyness and embarrassment of the morning gone; looking so bright, so animated, so full of kindness and of happiness; that even the adverse feelings of Mr. de Vere were subdued by the enchantment, and he went up to him with something of his old cordiality, and shook him by the hand.

"I beg your pardon, indeed," said Reginald, "for this second intrusion. But I am come, a messenger from my father to Mr. Lovel. Can I see him?" looking round. "Is he still in Edmund's room?"

"I believe so," said Mr. de Vere. "Clarice, my love, take a candle and show Mr. Vernon the way. Listen before you open the door; he may possibly be asleep."

Clarice rose, took the candle, and obeyed her father in silence.

"You will think it very strange, I fear, Miss de Vere," he began, when the door had closed behind them and they were walking comfortably together up-stairs, "that I should present myself again so soon."

Strange she might think it, but she did not look as if the surprise had been a very disagreeable one.

He then explained to her, in few words, the reason of his return.

"How right of your father! .... How wise of Mr. Higgins! .... How good of you, Mr. Vernon! ...."

Such were the little brief exclamations, which interrupted his narrative.

How sweet to each sounded their mutual voices as they spoke; how delightful their sensations as, side by side, they mounted the stairs; he holding the candle a little before her steps, as she passed lightly forward. Their sympathy in one common interest, their anxiety upon one common subject, did the work of time: they felt united, as if they had known each other for years.

And this is a very common effect of the infinite of love; it obliterates the past, as it fills the future. That mighty *now*, of which the poet speaks in his fearful picture of madness, is true, of the sweet insanity of love.

There was no longer the confusion and hesitation of the morning between them. They seemed perfectly to understand one another already; though not one syllable had been said; not one slightest allusion made to their mutual feelings.

Clarice was of a cheerful, trusting disposition; and so was her young and fervent lover: and now that she had, with a glance, seen the change in Mr. de Vere's manner, there was no fear for the future to mar the sweet complacency of her happy feelings. She had not, indeed, confessed these feelings even to herself; her sensations had never found expression even in her most secret thought; but, though unconfessed, her happiness was perfect. She did not *say*,—she felt that he loved her.

As for him, he watched her with feelings akin to rapture; he did *say*—his heart was busy talking to itself, it was vowing a devotion without limits, it was declaring a passion without bounds. It was already calling her angel!—love!—wife! It was binding itself to her everlastingly by every fond and endearing relation.

They stopped at the door, and she very gently knocked; the door was opened by Mrs. Fermor.

"Here is Mr. Vernon," began Clarice. "He is wishing to speak to Mr. Lovel: is he in the room? How is Edmund?"

"Just the same," whispered Mrs. Fermor; looking however at Reginald, with a surprise that did not seem altogether pleasant.

"He is come with a message to Mr. Lovel from Mr. Higgins," said Clarice, already involuntarily taking upon herself to find reasons for justifying all that Reginald did, or could do.

Mrs. Fermor re-entered the chamber. There was another short interval.

Then Mr. Lovel came out; his face still more grave and anxious than it had been in the morning.

"No better?" said Clarice and Reginald at once.

"No better," said Mr. Lovel, gravely.

Reginald then, in a few hasty words, delivered his father's message; adding the offer of his services to ride post in search of any physician that might be decided upon. A blush of pleasure and approbation mounted to the cheek of Clarice.

Mr. Lovel accepted the proposal with gratitude; and

they all three went down to the drawing-room to consult with Mr. de Vere. The two gentlemen were engaged some little time in consultation; while the young ones, standing side by side with their eyes bent earnestly upon them, waited the result with impatience.

At last it was settled that a messenger should be immediately despatched to the large county town, where a physician of great eminence resided; and Mr. de Vere had his hand upon the bell to summon a servant for the purpose, when Reginald came forward.

"My horses are fresh," said he; "and if Mr. Lovel authorises me, I will set out this moment. The physician may be from home; there may be a thousand delays; a thousand contingencies may arise—if I am on the spot I shall be better able to meet them. Give me but my commission, and I am gone. I will not return without help."

Mr. Lovel and Mr. de Vere exchanged glances, as he pressed his offer cordially upon them.

"I think Mr. Vernon is quite right in what he says," said Mr. de Vere; "though I am sorry he should be obliged to leave us again to-night."

"I thank you, Reginald," was all Mr. Lovel could say.

Reginald had his credentials delivered to him; and, without looking again at Clarice, he took his leave; the door closed after him, and he set forward; while she returned to her embroidery to muse upon sweet visions, and to watch for the blest moment of his return.

No one thought of going to bed that night. Edmund remained precisely in the same state; and the increasing

anxiety with which every one was filled, made it impossible to take rest.

Mr. Lovel returned to his post by the bed-side of his son; Mrs. de Vere sat upon her sofa, her hands clasped in mute expectation; while Mr. de Vere walked, as usual, up and down the room—but as Clarice, through the streaming tresses that hung over her bent-down face, stole, from time to time, a look at her father, she saw that his countenance, though very grave, perhaps even graver than usual, had lost something of that dark austerity which had so often made her heart tremble with undefined terrors.

What a sweet serenity fell upon her spirits! She had seldom known, secluded as she had lived, and sharing little in the enjoyments natural to her sex and age, what could be called happiness; such happiness as she now felt was quite a new sensation to her. How did she muse, how pause, how listen—how, long before it was within possibility that he could return, did she think, as the night wind swept around the house, that she heard the echo of his horse's hoof between the pauses! How beat her heart at the sound!

No, it was not he. But he was certain to return, and even expectation was delightful.

CHAPTER II.

Da lei vien l'animosa leggiadria,
Ch' al ciel ti scorge per destro sentero;
Si ch' i' vo già della speranza altero.

PETRARCH.

IN the meantime, Reginald, urging forward his horse at full speed, breasted the cool breezes of that fine September night. He was in a tumult of happiness. To his sanguine temper, the very pursuit of means was ever as the attainment of ends. He forgot that he was yet only on the way seeking for the means of safety; he looked upon Edmund as already saved; and relieved from his pressing anxiety, abandoned himself to all the delightful visions of the hour..

So lovely! so tender! so exquisitely fair! All his romantic ideas of perfection, all his generous plans for the happiness of others, on the point, as he thought, of being realised.... Could he mistake those innocently treacherous eyes? those sweetest, sweetest of mortal eyes? Could he not read the language of that softest of human voices? those tones!... How brightly spread the prospect of life before him, when that restoration,

of which he had so fondly dreamed, should be accomplished, and the man in whose fate he had taken so deep an interest, should see the long alienated property in the hands of his descendants!

His imagination carried him forward to his happy English home. He saw the lovely mistress of his affections, fair wife, fair mother, dignifying and blessing the sphere in which she moved; he saw her surrounded by a train of honouring dependents; the ring of children's laughter was in his ears; and faces as of the loves and graces of Guido were half hid among ten thousand flowers! Such were the visions of this youthful, ardent, but most natural and simple heart!

The horses, mean time, swept the ground, galloping at the top of their speed.

They reached a small post town half way, and here Reginald, throwing his bridle to his groom, with a charge to take care of his exhausted steed, called for a chaise, and, saying he should go on alone, had speedily mounted the high-perched, most uncomfortable vehicle; and was rattling down the dark, ill-paved street at a prodigious rate.

The night was moonless; the stars were few; the trees as giants walking, darkly hurried by the chaise; when, sitting bolt upright in the middle of the vehicle, Renald began to exchange his rose-coloured reveries for others of a soberer hue.

The fair vision of Clarice took its leave for the present: and, as he sat looking out of the window, and measuring, as it were, by the flying hedges the rapidity with which he advanced, he was thinking only of how

soon he should arrive, whether the doctor would be at home, and when he could hope to have him by the side of his friend.

They entered the wide streets of the large county town about eleven o'clock. The doors were shut, the shops closed; a passenger here and there on foot, stealing home by the light of a lantern; the knock and the shutting to of a distant door; the old, heavy-coated watchman, with decrepid and feeble steps, creeping along the side of the street, and calling in nasal, unintelligible accents, the hour; all that was to be seen or heard.

The loud cathedral clock was striking as Reginald entered the close, and stood before the doctor's door, the huge brass knocker of which was speedily making the night clamorous under his impatient hand.

A servant, looking half asleep, opened the door.

"Is Doctor B. at home?" was the first hasty question.

The answer was in the affirmative.

The unfortunate physician had just retired to his bed, where he lay rejoicing in the prospect of eight hours' undisturbed repose, not having any case of moment upon his list; but he was speedily aroused by Mr. Lovel's letter; and in a very short time he joined Reginald in the drawing-room.

The details which he there received seemed greatly to add to his alarm; and he declared himself ready to return with him, without a moment's delay. Fresh horses were speedily procured, and in half an hour they were together upon the road—The gray dawn of morn-

[illegible] as they entered the [illegible] in the [illegible] Holbicote.

[illegible] and were instantly admitted. The [illegible] were in, assuring their arrival with the greatest [illegible]. Some change had taken place in the patient in the morning had become more difficult, every respiration being accompanied by a heavy [illegible], at which Mrs. Lowe and Mrs. Fermor were [illegible].

The [illegible] had scarcely been, when Reginald and the physician entered the hall, and Mr. and Mrs. de Vere were standing upon the threshold; Clarice was [illegible] upon the stairs, looking pale and jaded, and listening with terror to the distressing sounds, which might be heard through the open gallery door.

They all turned forward and greeted Reginald and the physician.

Mr. and Mrs. de Vere hastily shook hands with him, but there was time for nothing more; the ring at the bell had been heard in the sick room; and Mrs. Fermor appeared at the head of the stairs, candle in hand, to beseech the Doctor to come up immediately.

He threw off his great coat, and ascended the stairs, followed by Mr. and Mrs. de Vere; leaving Reginald and Clarice in the hall.

"Oh! Mr. Vernon," she cried, and casting her wearied eyes upon him, with an expression of the deepest thankfulness; "how happy it is that you are come; do you hear those horrid groans? Good heavens! What did Doctor B. say? What does he think? What will he do?"

Reginald shook his head, and was silent. He had been made to understand, during their journey together, that Doctor B. considered the case as nearly desperate. All his fine spirits were gone; he looked as he felt, deeply depressed.

They had ascended the stairs together, and were now at the room door, which was half open; and there they stood, not venturing to enter, but both gazing mournfully at the scene within.

United by the same deep and solemn feeling, they stood side by side, yet scarcely conscious of it; for there, upon his bed, pale and deathlike, lay he, whom they both loved so dearly. His face turned towards them; his eyes closed; there lay Edmund!—His father, whose back was turned, was leaning over him; the Doctor, on the other side the bed, was taking out a lancet; at the foot stood Mr. and Mrs. de Vere, in mute and sorrowful attention.

The instant the Doctor had examined his patient, he said, "We must open the temple vein."

The physician, practising in this remote part of the country, often called upon to attend under emergencies, when the delay of a few minutes might determine as to life or death, never travelled without his lancets.

The emergency was stringent—life or death was depending. Mrs. Fermor passed her hand round to support the patient's head—the lancet struck—the blood flowed, and he opened his eyes.

. . . . . The heavy deathlike gloom in which I lay shrouded, seemed, as it were, slowly to clear away . . . . It was as if light was dawning again within the secret chambers of my brain; as if the weight of a darkness, "that could be felt," was by degrees dispersing; there was a sort of vision, as of great brightness, as I opened my eyes,—as if the room were illuminated by ten thousand candles.

Many figures were wavering and flitting around . . . And there—radiant, as it were, with sunbeams, which seemed to point from and glisten round their garments—there they stood, in bright and unearthly beauty before me! . . . Side by side they stood; their kind faces bent earnestly towards my bed; their bright eyes filled with love and pity . . . .

But the vision melted again into thin air. I had fainted away.

My Clarice stretched her arms, and was pressing forward with a faint cry, as she saw me expire, as it seemed, before her eyes. Reginald saw the Doctor's earnest look, imploring and commanding quiet and silence; he caught her by the arm, to prevent her rushing into the room; she burst into tears, and turned away. It was then all over! he was gone! . . . .

"My love! my Clarice!" he whispered. "Don't cry so: it is not all over."

"You think so?" said she, lifting up her sweet face, and looking into his. "Oh, Edmund!"

"He moves," whispered Reginald, bending tenderly over her. "Be still,—he moves."

There was a dead silence in the room; only inter-

rupted by the movements of the Doctor, as he quietly opened the casement and gave entrance to the fresh morning air.

In the meantime Mrs. Fermor, lifting up her hand, had signed to Reginald to lead Clarice away. She alone, of all present, had observed the effect which her appearance seemed invisibly to produce upon the patient.

Reginald understood the signal, and, his arm still supporting her, gently drew her away.

She had with difficulty restrained her tears during the whole evening; and now they had once found vent, they flowed abundantly: so up and down that long gallery they continued to walk; she weeping, and he silently observing her. With what emotions, I will not attempt to describe. . . . .

Then they turned, and listened together again at the door. Presently Mrs. Fermor appeared. "He may live," she said; "there are hopes that he may live."

Mr. de Vere came out next. "Doctor B. is asking for ice, Mrs. Fermor. We have none. Where is it to be got?"

"The ice-house is filled at Mount Sorel!" cried Reginald. "I will return home immediately, and get some down."

"But you are on foot," said Mr. de Vere. "Your horses are not here."

"Go by the wood," said Mrs. Fermor; "you will be there in a quarter of an hour."

"Follow me," said Mr. de Vere; "I will show you the way."

He opened the door which led to the terrace; and, followed by Reginald, stepped out and plunged into that deep, dark wood; the scene of so many wild and melancholy musings.

The distance was not great: in less than ten minutes they stood at the foot of the wooden bridge.

"Now, sir, you know your way?" said the ancient heir of the land standing on the boundary; and gazing wistfully at the shining stream, now gleaming in the faint evening twilight.

"I do perfectly," said Reginald. "I am quite at home now:" and he set his foot forward lightly, to cross the bridge.

Mr. de Vere laid his hand upon his arm.

"Do not," he said, endeavouring in vain to speak without agitation, "do not bring your men up this way—this path. I would rather—I would wish—I would desire that it should not be known to any one. —I have often walked it, but you are the first beside myself.... Below, opposite the lower part of the flower-garden, the brook is shallow; let them cross there."

Reginald was struck and affected with the dark, troubled expression of his companion's face, as he stood shaking, and held by the bridge.

"Not for the world," he cried, "would I do any thing to annoy you, Sir. Heaven forbid!"

A something almost like compassion in his accents, aroused Mr. de Vere. He mastered the momentary weakness; and resuming his customary proud, reserved air, said, slightly, "I shall feel obliged—"

As Reginald hastily crossed the bridge, Mr. de Vere turned suddenly away, and was lost in the thicket.

Arrived there, he sat down; yielding for the moment to the strange tumult of offended pride, of regret, of sorrow, that agitated him.

He did not reflect; his mind was, at such moments, incapable of reflection. It was all distress; he could not think, he could only feel; and all he felt, was pain.

After some time, the tempest, as was its wont, gradually subsided; he returned to the house; and relapsed into his usual state of passive suffering.

to arouse myself from my state of dreamy repose. A very gentle pressure of my dear father's hand, to which he still more gently responded, was the only recognition that passed between us.

A little medicine was now administered by my kind physician, and soon after this I closed my eyes and fell into a delicious slumber. I was slightly aroused by some one noiselessly quitting the room; and the faint roll of a distant carriage seemed afterwards to mingle with my dreams.

He had seen me safe, and he was gone to pursue the course of his honourable life; to carry consolation to other chambers of suffering, and summon the beloved of other hearts from the confines of the grave.

Doctor B. had just passed through the lodge gate when the postilion stopped his horses, and looking out of the window to ask what was the matter, the Doctor saw Reginald. His hand was on the chaise door.

"May I come in," he said, "Doctor, and travel in your company for a mile?"

And, without waiting for permission, in he sprang.

After a few insignificant sentences had passed between them, Reginald said, "I believe it is reckoned improper, to ask of a professional man any but general questions with respect to the state of his patient; but I have very particular reasons—reasons which regard the happiness of my friend as well as my own—for beseeching you to tolerate in me a breach of this propriety."

"Speak on," said the Doctor. "I will give you what satisfaction I can."

"Was the medical man right who attributed this

sudden attack of the epidemic which, he says, is now about the country?"

"It is difficult to say: but I must acknowledge that I am not without my doubts upon the subject."

"To what then should you attribute it?"

"Nay, I do not say I attribute it—but such attacks are often the consequence of some violent shock upon the spirits: only that there does not seem reason to apprehend that any such thing has been the case here."

Reginald was silent.

He mused some minutes, and then he said, "I have some reason to think it possible that Edmund may, in secret, have undergone a violent struggle with himself. I have my fears—I suspect it."

"Then, if such be the case," said the physician, "there, in all probability, are we to seek for the cause of his seizure."

"Thank you, Sir," said Reginald; "I will detain you no longer." He called to the postilion to stop, shook hands with the Doctor, leaped out of the chaise, and returned whence he came.

I slept long, and it was evening when I awoke; the curtains were drawn so as to render the light more soft and obscure; but through it, as I turned myself round and opened my eyes, I met the kind, affectionate gaze of Reginald.—He was sitting, watching by me, and no one else was in the room; he, blest with that fine health, which rendered him proof against fatigue and anxiety, had sent all the wearied and exhausted watchers to bed, and had taken his place by the side of his slumbering friend.

He was looking at me, with a mixture of tenderness

and anxiety in his face. You would have thought that he was endeavouring, as he watched my sleeping countenance, to penetrate some mystery yet unravelled—a mystery in which the happiness of his patient, still more than his own, was involved; for his countenance bore that expression of affectionate interest which it is impossible to misunderstand.

"Reginald," I faintly said, stretching out my feeble hand.

"Dearest Edmund!"

He took my offered hand and held it some time in his, looking at me all the while, with a mixture of affection, kindness, interest, and a sort of tender sympathy, which it is impossible to describe.

Dear, excellent, generous Reginald! How could my hard ungrateful heart harbour for one moment those unjust and jealous feelings, which had driven me nearly to distraction. Thank Heaven they were abated for the present; the violent paroxysm which my frame had endured, seemed to have changed the current of my feelings; gentler and tenderer sensations visited and calmed me. The influence of thy generous kindness was not altogether without its effect.

Some little time was thus passed. He, holding my hand, leaning on the bed, and gazing so kindly at me; I watching him. At last he said,

"We must obey orders, Edmund. I was commanded to ring the bell as soon as you awoke. The womenkind would not trust me to give you a spoonful of stuff, if it were to save your life."

The summons was speedily answered by Nurse.

She administered the refreshments proper for me, and in a whisper, told Reginald, that by Mrs. Fermor's desire she was now to take his place as a watcher.

He took my hand, again looked at me cheerily, and saying, "Well, thou most positive of thy arbitrary sex, thou shalt be obeyed. Good night, Edmund of my heart!" he went away.

While Nurse crept about the room, arranging this, and settling that, in a lulling, monotonous manner; while the candle she had placed behind the curtain threw its long shadows mysteriously about the room; while the beat of a fly now and then struck against the ceiling; and the hushed night-wind rustled gently among the trees by the window:—amid all these stilly and lulling noises, the dew of heavenly slumber fell once more upon me; and another long forgetfulness repaired the ravages which suffering had made in my frame.

Another day and another night were spent much in the same languid, dreamy manner. A week, I believe, nearly—for I can keep no account of that *curtained* time—passed over me.

My kind friends succeeded each other in tending and watching by my bed-side. I still felt little inclination to speak; and it was evident that all who attended me were equally desirous to avoid conversation or excitement of any kind.

My father sat reading or musing, at my side. Mrs. Fermor had knitting, or her netting. But Nurse sat by with fingers busily employed, which, as I lay, I watched with the greatest pleasure.

It was usually some small and delicate work—I guessed for whom intended. The fine cambric handkerchief; the pretty white satin and pink lined mittens; or some such little articles of the toilet in preparation. How did the transparent lace, the beautiful lawn, the white, and blue, and pink morsels of satin, that lay on Nurse's lap, captivate my eyes! I often closed them and dosed, when others were on duty; but they were always wide open, and fixed upon Nurse and her operations.

Nurse talked as much as she dared; and I encouraged her to talk, for she spoke of Clarice.

What pretty anecdotes did this dear little, lively Welshwoman, in her clipped English, tell of her foster child! How the scenes of my infant love and idolatry rose before my eyes, as the sweet, lively, affectionate, spoiled baby was painted before me, with that truth of colouring which seems to be a natural attribute of those belonging to Nurse's class. I listened with a serene but melancholy pleasure, as one listens to sweet memories of the beloved and departed. Sometimes would Nurse enter in secret whispers, and with a clouded and awe-struck countenance, upon a more fearful theme. She would hint at the dark and unaccountable outbursts of Mr. de Vere; she would tell me of the observations of the servants; of their ill-concealed terrors; and of their unfeigned pity. His midnight wanderings in those dark woods, which they regarded with a sort of mysterious horror; the long hours passed alone, locked up in his study, into which even the old favourite steward endeavoured too often to penetrate in vain; were described with a certain shuddering interest. His sud-

den flashes of rage, as suddenly and instantaneously repressed; his long, unbroken silences; his haughty and cold reserve, which filled every breast with secret awe; all were detailed. Nor was his aversion to his new neighbour, to his person, to his plans, to his politics, softened in the recital. It was evident that Mr. de Vere's prejudices in this respect were most heartily shared by his whole family; and I could scarcely forbear a smile at the portrait of Mr. Higgins, as painted by the lively fancy of Nurse...." As a creet, big, black, Jacobin; living in that beautiful manor-house; trinking his ales and his beers, and goppling down his beefes and his porks; like some of them old bloody Welsh giants, years agone, in their caves, like."

The nice tastes of the elegant household at Holnicote had certainly been outraged by many of the new world proceedings at Mount Sorel. But as for the ales and the beers, that, as I have shown, was a calumny.

" Big, red-faced fellows, a standing, hulking behind his cheers—at his dinners and his feasts—a scrambling and a waiting, no one knows how."

" He's very kind to the poor, Nurse, in spite of his clumsy footmen."

But Nurse would concede nothing. " He fery kint to the poor, inteed! a making them 'ork and toil like slafes! no creet thanks for that;—no coals, and soups, and flannels, and so on, given as we too at Holnicote; —nothink but 'ork pe given at Mount Sorel; and there is plenty of *that*, to be sure."

She would then proceed to admit me into the more secret schemes and councils of her own heart.

She would lament the seclusion to which this beautiful pearl of the world, as she considered her foster child, was condemned; and, in a manner that even many a marriage-hunting mother would have considered a *little* too undisguised, would hint her wish, that "some nice, young, tall chentleman, about...." naming my precise age—"with a pretty fortin, and well to do in the 'orld, 'ould come a courting Miss Clarice, and take her out of this tesart—as pad or 'orse than any nunnery, she was sartin; for there, in a nunnery, there 'ould be at least young creatures like herself, for her to make her prittles and prattles with, instead of only stiff little Gooty Fermor".... as Nurse, somewhat jealous of this last, styled her.

Of Reginald alone she did not speak; and I dared not lead to the subject. Pleased—I could not help being pleased—that she evidently pointed at me in her airy castles, I could not bear to awaken her to the suspicion that another, alas! might prove the hero of her fanciful tale.

All these various ideas, presented to me in the bright confusion in which they lay in Nurse's brain, afforded the food on which I ruminated many an hour.

Reginald visited me every day.

His manner had lost a good deal of its usual animation; the airy, careless joyousness of his countenance and demeanour was gone. He talked with me quietly and gravely, carefully avoiding every subject which could occasion the slightest emotion. But when I suddenly looked up at him, I could often detect his eyes

fixed upon mine, with that same inquiring, penetrating air which I had before observed; and their expression was clouded and uneasy.

Still he preserved silence, the most unbroken silence; and seemed resolved, not by the remotest hint to allude to the subject that was occupying us both. I, on the other hand, maintained a calm and serene expression of countenance, from which he could learn nothing.

But I was forming my resolutions.

I had employed the silent hours of many a watchful night, in reviewing all that had passed. My long attachment to Clarice; her evident affection for me; the passion with which she had inspired my friend; his peculiar position, my peculiar position, with respect to this most unfortunate property; the sufferings of Mr. de Vere, and through him of all those I loved, upon this fatal subject; my father's high notions of the sacrifices which might in this case be demanded by honour; the example of delicate and honourable feeling set me by Reginald:—I had reviewed it all.

The passionate revolt of my heart against the sacrifice that seemed demanded, yielded in these moments of coolness and consideration, to the desire to do what was right. And, after much meditation, I arrived at my first conclusion: a conclusion which I have, ever since, upon the subject, invariably maintained.

That a mutual and honourable attachment is the most sacred and valuable of earthly things; and, as such, ought to be inviolable, and to be maintained, in despite of the merely external difficulties or perplexities of life. That love has its rights and duties, as well as its sacri-

fices; and that the heart of another is far too precious a deposit to be yielded to claims of expediency, however urgent. But was that heart mine?

There were three ways of considering this question. Her heart might already be my own; and I, blessed beyond any created being! would not, and ought not to abandon the possession before any consideration upon earth. If she were, indeed, mine; if her happiness had been in her innocence confided to me; my first duty was to secure it. And secure it I would in defiance of all the world!

But how, if—if, as my sinking heart foreboded—how, if that heart were already another's? . . . .

The struggle was severe, but justice triumphed at last, and my resolution was taken. If Reginald had already obtained that inestimable jewel—as he would have done by me, so would I do by him. Having won, he should wear, undisturbed by me—unconscious of the misery of his friend. I would withdraw: my secret, yet undisclosed, should die with me: their happiness should not be marred by the spectacle of my agony.

But there was yet a more nice and difficult alternative.

How, if that heart were yet at liberty? How, if the field was still open to us both?

Ah, there was the difficulty!

Should I yield the day to him, fly from Holnicote, and abandon every chance of happiness; or should I accept the offer so generously made, and suffer him to retire in order to make room for me?

Should I accept the sacrifice of his happiness and well-

being, and of the happiness and advantage of so many, and gratify my selfish passion at this heavy expense?

The struggle was sharp; but the better spirit prevailed. Reginald should remain. I would conceal the state of my feelings; I would not interfere to mar a prospect so bright for all. If Clarice were yet to be won, he should have his fair chance. I would not interfere; we would be honourable rivals. If, after all....! Oh! Hope ecstatic! My conscience at ease—honour and principle satisfied—with what untold rapture would I clasp my treasure to my heart of hearts!

Had Nurse's insinuations and stories given force to that secret hope, which perhaps gave me strength to determine upon this course?.... Alas! poor frail ones! Imperfect in our best resolves! Perhaps that hope lay at the foundation of my virtuous determination... And yet—let me do myself justice—desperate were the struggles with which I attained even to this!

My first care was, according to these new resolutions, to conceal my secret from Reginald; my second, to endeavour to penetrate the sentiments of Clarice.

I had not yet been allowed to see her; but I now expected soon to be upon my sofa; and I was certain that once in the sitting-room, that was preparing for me, nothing would keep my Clarice from my side.

At length one day, Reginald alluded to the subject.

We had been talking cheerfully together, and I appeared so well that he ventured upon it.

"Edmund," he began, in a hesitating manner, "did you . . . did you get . . . a letter . . . that I wrote?" . . .

"I did."

"And . . . and . . . you have given me yet no answer .... Edmund, I feel that it is time .... that all disguise ought to cease between us. It is necessary that I should read your heart; I have opened mine to you."

All the blood seemed freezing in my veins, as he thus opened upon the painful subject.

I was silent for a few minutes, then I said:

"This is a subject that interests me .... that, I mean .... I do not feel myself yet equal to entering upon it. Wait a few days longer, dear Reginald, and I will explain myself fully."

"The suspense is painful," was his reply. And his pale cheek and faltering voice told me *how* painful. But with his usual kind regard for the feelings of others, he said no more.

Two days after this I was carried into the apartment, arranged to serve at present as a sitting-room; and laid upon a sofa near the window.

The autumn leaves were now beginning to fall, and fade like my hopes of happiness; but a certain calm melancholy had succeeded to my first violent agitation; and I awaited my doom with a composure that astonished myself.

I believe that when the mind has once resolved upon the surrender of all we hold dear, life becomes more easy: a certain sullen indifference succeeds to the feverish alternations of hope and fear; and thus it is that

we endure existence, and survive the wreck of all our happiness.

The first persons who visited me were Mr. and Mrs. de Vere; who congratulated me most kindly upon my convalescence. Mrs. Fermor came next with her kind looks and words; and while she was sitting with me, my Clarice entered.

How lovely she looked! Pale she was—paler than usual—and a dark circle was round her beautiful eyes; but those eyes were lighted with affectionate joy and kindness; and her sweet face was dressed in smiles as she opened the door, and with,

"At last, they tell me, I may come in,"—came up to the side of my sofa; took the hand I held out, and pressed it affectionately; crying,—"Dear Edmund! how very, very glad I am to see you again."

"Ah, Clarice!" said I, looking at her with a melancholy tenderness. "How sweet is your voice to me! How precious are all these kind words to your poor Edmund!"

"You have been very ill," she said, tenderly; "very ill; and how pale you look, poor Edmund!.... But now you will soon be well, won't you? Now I shall have my share of nursing. I shall fetch your books, and read to you; I shall fetch my work, and sit by and chat with you; just as we used to do in those happy, happy days before you went abroad."

I sighed. There was a something in all this innocent, cordial, undisguised kindness, sweet as it all was, that pained me.

"Ah, Edmund!" said she, looking with a little arch smile at me; "what is that sighing for? I think the last thing you did before that fatal day, was to sigh—and now, the first thing I hear when we meet again, is a sigh. Is there a reason for it, Edmund? Is there some foreign lady—some Clementina—that has carried away our Edmund's heart? I must and shall have it all out, Edmund; you positively shall not sigh so;" for I sighed again, looking at her sweet, playful face all the time; "you positively shall not, without rendering a reason, Sir."

Her hand was near mine, as she prattled away. It lay upon the shawl that covered me; I took it, and drawing her a little towards me, said, in a low voice,

"Has Clarice no confessions to make? I thought I heard *her* sigh."

A sudden rosy glow flashed up over her face at this; but she turned it off.

"I—poor recluse! How should I have confessions to make? But you have been seeing the world, Mr. Edmund."

I let go her hand: mine trembled so, that I could not hold it. That tell-tale blush—oh, Heaven! How was I to understand it?

After a little pause, she began upon a new topic. It was evidently her wish to divert my thoughts, from what, by my agitation, she judged to be a painful subject.

She began to inquire about my travels; and to discuss the impressions received from the different scenes and societies I had visited. I almost lost my sense of anxiety, in the charm of her delightful conversation.

She was so eminently—that which all men delight to find in women—an intelligent and sympathising listener, a penetrating and lively annotator. It seems to us as if the *body*, if I may so say, of discourse should be furnished by ourselves; while the spirit, the life, the animus, we delight to derive from that most intelligent of all created beings, an intelligent woman—A creature unencumbered by ponderous learning, for which neither the capacities of her body nor mind are calculated; but with her curiosity and imagination sufficiently excited, to render her an eager recipient of knowledge; and endowed with that clear intuitive perception of things, which seems the attribute of that charming sex—which certainly has the latent angel in it—An intuition, which often enables her to spring to conclusions and arrive at inferences, the truth and accuracy of which excite our astonishment, when we compare them with what appear to us the very inadequate means by which they are obtained.

Such was eminently my Clarice. Girlish, almost childish still, in her appearance and manners; the shades of thought and of feeling would often pass over her brow, in a manner I have faintly endeavoured to describe to you. A certain momentary contraction shaded, and gave an interest and beauty to her countenance, which I have, I think, never seen equalled in any other. The contrast with the usual animation, even careless gaiety of her manner, rendered these changes excessively interesting. How I had loved to watch them! And now, as I lay idly responding to her questions, furnishing matter, as it were, to feed her thoughts—how did I

watch these rapid changes? These gleams of sunshine and of shade? that now brightened, now clouded, those beautiful eyes.

Then, the intelligence of her questions; the quickness with which she discovered relations, which had escaped me; the ready sympathy with sorrow or with happiness, with beauty or with sublimity... I have called a woman the annotator of the page of man's existence. I should have compared her to some sweet accompanying music, that attunes the poem of his life into harmony....

She had sent for her work; and, as I lay in luxurious languor upon the sofa, her busy fingers were actively passing her shining needle through the canvass before her. Her sweet face now lifted up, now bent down, as the conversation we carried on, or the convolvulus she was manufacturing, engaged her attention.

I shall never forget it.

The room they had given me was at the end of the gallery, and terminated in a large oriel window, surrounded with the beautiful creeping shrubs and trees that were trained all over that side of the house. The view from it was over the woods and valley, the winding stream and the dark hills of Mount Sorel. It was now October, and the brown tints of autumn gave inexpressible beauty to the view: throwing off the outline of the trees one against each other, and giving that peculiar richness to the scene so well understood by artists.

The room was another of those old fashioned, wainscoted apartments which are common in old houses;

but it was more richly ornamented than usual with gilding and carving, and hung with abundance of old paintings, the colouring of which relieved most agreeably the otherwise sombre hue of the walls. The room was of considerable size, and had three windows, the oriel and two casements, along the other side of the room. My sofa was placed across the oriel, so that as I lay my eye commanded the view, and I was in a manner separated from the rest of the room, and had a little distinct apartment of my own; within which were my reading table, and various chairs, and small settees; and it was here, by the side of my sofa, that my lovely Clarice was sitting.

At the farthest casement Mrs. Fermor, or Nurse, kept watch, sitting at work, for they thought me too ill to be left quite by myself: but they could not distinctly hear what passed at the other end of the room.

So that we were alone, and not alone, at the same time.

Let me dwell—let my poor fond memory dwell upon that scene, that day, that chamber impressed in indelible colours upon my heart. That still autumn day—the low chirps of the small birds—the universal quiet of nature—that stilly, hushed pause in existence, when her great voice is still. No lowing of cattle in the meadows—no bleat of sheep upon the hills—no merry singing voice of birds—no cawing rooks—all hushed in the repose of that decline, when the labour and interests of the summer day of life being over, Nature calmly pauses, as it were, before she sinks into her last wintry repose.

Emblem of human life! Divine typical picture of

that progressive career, the end and final aim, as it would seem, of all this lavished beauty and contrivance—its relations shadowed forth in such varied hieroglyphics wherever we turn our eyes. And the sympathies, may I reverently call them so, of that adorable and infinite benevolence expressed in every scene: uniting, by innumerable minute links, the human intellect and heart, with the vast everlasting spirit, the foundation of all that is wisdom, all that is love.

CHAPTER IV.

Me from myself thy cruel eye hath taken,
And my next self thou harder hast engross'd;
Of him, myself, and thee, I am forsaken.

SHAKSPEARE.

WE were sitting thus together the next day—she engaged with her work, now raising her head and chatting, now musing and silent—I, in all that luxury of repose, which attends upon convalescence, watching her; and idly answering to her pleasant, idle talk.

When a quick step was heard in the gallery. Her ear caught it quick as mine; my fast-beating heart told me who approached; while the blushes, which flew over her face, and the trembling of the small, fair hand that plied the needle, betrayed that she too knew full well whose step it was.

The door opened and Reginald entered. There was a something which fell short of the usual glow of health and gaiety in his appearance; he was paler, and a certain cloud was over his eyes, as, with a face full of the kindest affection, he came straight up to the back of my sofa—with—"Dearest Edmund, are you there at last? Heaven be praised!"....

But as he hastily advanced to take my proffered hand, which I, half rising, held out, his eye caught the figure of Miss de Vere; she was rising hastily as if to meet him; then was as hastily reseating herself..... Their eyes met—I saw it—it was enough. Seized with a sickness as of death, I sank back upon my pillow.

They both flew to me as with one accord.

"Dearest Edmund!—dearest Edmund!" in their sweet mingled voices. "What is the matter?"....

My Clarice was soon kneeling by my side, and her arm was under my fainting head in a moment; while Reginald was hanging over the back of the sofa with a glass of water in his hand.

The water touched my lips....the light hand of my Clarice bathed my temples; while their kind voices in faint exclamations, expressed all their anxiety and sympathy.

The cold application to my temples once more drove back the blood from my throbbing brain. My self-possession in some degree returned, and with considerable effort, I opened my eyes—to meet theirs as they bent over me, one on each side...intent upon me, and almost forgetting the presence of each other in grief for my sufferings. I took a hand of each and pressed it; my heart blessed them both in spite of all! What could I do but bless them?

After swallowing a little more cold water, now presented by my Clarice while her soft arm gently raised my head, my spirit revived, and I felt better. But still quite unable to speak, I closed my eyes again for a few moments to give myself time to recover composure.

They sat down: she, drawing her chair close beside me, and watching me; he, on the other side of the sofa. I felt as if their eyes rained influence.... In spite of all my distress, a coolness, a softness, an indescribable sweetness, stole like balm over my poor heart. When sorrow melts to tears; when horror softens to pity; when bitter disappointment subsides into patient regret; such is that quiet which steals upon the soul.

As I lay, all of generosity and affection that had lain dormant in my nature, overborne by the selfishness and vehemence of passion, began to revive. How they both seemed to love me! How formed they were to love each other! and yet how nobly had Reginald suppressed his passion, till assured that it would not militate against my happiness! If they loved, so affectionate as they both were, how would the certainty that my happiness had been the sacrifice of theirs cloud their brightest moments!—Should this be?.. No! I would force back, into the inmost recesses of my heart, that anguish which I felt to be insupportable. There, in those silent chambers, should it lie, festering at the secret springs of life; but their happiness should be unimpaired!

When I opened my eyes again, they were both looking at me. Clarice, with the tenderest anxiety, but evidently without the slightest suspicion of the cause of this sudden seizure.... but Reginald's eye questioned me. Perplexity, doubt, apprehension, were mingled in his countenance with the kindness and pity of an angel. I could not resist his imploring, anxious look. I pressed his hand, and looking at him, said: "I shall be able to write to you to-morrow, Reginald."

He answered this by a look of grave acquiescence; then turned away his head and bent his eyes in silence upon the floor. In this attitude he remained some time.

In the meantime I had not relinquished the hand of Clarice, which had been clasped in mine: I could not relinquish it. I felt as if in so doing I should sever the last link that held us together.

Alas! her hand lay passive in mine as in that of a poor sick brother. No fluttering consciousness warned her to withdraw it!

We were all three silent for some space. At last Reginald raised his head, and seemed to awaken from the deep reverie into which he had fallen. He spoke, and Clarice answered. And over me their bright eyes met, their voices mingled, their ideas flowed, as if suddenly relieved from some self-imposed restraint.

I found afterwards, that ever since Reginald's last interview with the physician, he had altogether abstained from holding any communication with Clarice but such as mere ceremonial politeness required. Pledged, as he thought himself, by honour and friendship to me; he would not until an explanation had passed between us, allow himself in a look or action which might assist in forwarding his own cause, or tend to supplant me.

During the first two days of my illness, it is true—relieved from his suspicions by the assurance of the first medical man that all the distressing symptoms which he had witnessed were but the precursors of an epidemic fever—he had yielded to the sweet attraction which impelled him to her feet. But his conversation with Doctor B. had again awakened his suspicions; and sorely

as he was tempted—by opportunity, and by those wondering, innocent eyes—this true and honourable friend resisted steadily. Resolved not to endanger my peace by tampering with a heart, which a flattering consciousness told him might yet be won.

He would first be assured of my true situation: what were my feelings, what my hopes: and whether a tacit engagement subsisted between us.

Clarice had of course silently acquiesced in this unlooked-for estrangement; and had met his reserve with a reserve still greater on her own part.

But now that they had met in the quiet of my sick chamber, ceremony and reserve again dissipated by their mutual anxiety for me, it was impossible to resist the sweet influence of each other's presence.

As unsealed fountains leaping into life, so, their ideas seemed to pour forth in that delightful exchange of thought which makes true lovers, to the surprise of all who have forgotten or have not known true love, never weary of one another's company.

They looked so happy; and Clarice cast such a confiding eye upon me—secure, dear innocent! of my sympathy in her happiness; that for a short instant these sweet influences prevailed even over me.

I almost shared the felicity I witnessed.

Ah! blest indeed, could we for ever have been thus united! Could but that precious spring of Lethe have smothered memory! Could I but learn to forget.

Alas! that I was comparatively happy now—what was it, but that my fate was not even yet irrevocably decided! that I still felt it in my own hands.... Those

fingers yet were clasped in mine! Clasped in mine! Yes, to Clarice what was I, but a parent, a friend, a brother! under whose protection she ventured to indulge the fond pleasure of conversing with Reginald....

Mrs. Fermor had been called away, no one had taken her place; and Clarice and I were alone when Reginald entered.

I do not know how long we had been thus sitting, when Reginald took out his watch; and starting, and exclaiming that he was an hour after the time when he had promised to be with his father, he rose to go.

He looked earnestly at me as he bade me farewell.

"To-morrow," I said.

He pressed my hand and left the room.

And now was the moment arrived on which I had so long anxiously pondered.

We were alone: the opportunity was not to be allowed to escape. Now would I enter upon the fatal subject with Clarice. Now would I endeavour to read the secret of her heart. Alas! did I not already know it? What were all these hesitations, these subterfuges, these delays, but the last vain pretences of the soul which will not be convinced?

"My dearest Clarice," I said, endeavouring to open the conversation with calmness, "will you sit down by me? I have something to say to you which I must delay no longer; but my voice and spirit are weak, and I must speak low."

She again drew her chair, which had receded a little during our late colloquy, close to my sofa: and fixed her eyes with a sort of wondering, attentive gravity upon mine.

Mine searched hers.

Could I discover the slightest shade of hesitation, weakness, or confusion, as mine strove to penetrate into her soul? Alas! all was calm, serene, untroubled, as the mountain lake beneath the summer sky.

At last, after we had looked thus at one another for some time; she laughed, in her pleasant cheering way, and said:

"Well, Edmund, dear, what is this mighty secret which carries such a grave face before it?"

"Clarice! You have been looking into my eyes.... Can you read my soul?"

I looked then as she had never in her life seen me look before.

Her eyes *did* fall at last; and she said, with some confusion, and in a very low tone,

"Not *now*, Edmund."

"Can you read my soul, Clarice?" I repeated loudly and more passionately; and rising from my pillow as if I would have thrown myself at her feet. "Can you read the tale of passion and of agony inscribed upon its fearful pages?"

"Edmund!" she cried, starting back, and looking up at me with surprise and alarm.

"Or are we," cried I, with increasing excitement, "already lost for ever to each other? And can we understand our mutual hearts no more?"

"Edmund!" was all she could say.

She had started from her chair, and looked at me with mingled wonder and terror.

"Don't leave me, Clarice. Stay! Sit down. I will compose myself—this moment—these next moments. Sit down, Clarice," cried I, panting between emotion and weakness.

She sat down; but I saw she was trembling excessively. I panted and gasped for breath. I fell down, and rose again from my pillow in a storm of agitation. . . . I had lost all mastery over myself.

At last I stretched out my hand, and seizing hers almost fiercely,

"Tell!—Tell me!—Tell me!"—I cried. "Tell me, this instant—do you love me? Or—do you love another?"

"How can you doubt my affection, Edmund?" said she, withdrawing her hand and looking very grave. "Have I ever given you cause?"

A bright flash darted across my heart; I fell rather than flung myself from the sofa, sank at her feet, and clasped her knees. . . .

"Angel! Angel! Oh, you love me then?"

And my eyes were fixed passionately—adoringly fixed upon hers.

"Edmund, let me go!" she cried, now aroused on her side, and starting up. "What do you mean? This is very, very, very wrong! What are you about, Edmund?"

"Mean! I mean that I love you; that I adore you; that my whole being is but one with yours;

that yours I am, for life—for eternity; and that, if you would save me from utter destruction, you must be mine!"

"Good Heavens!" she cried, casting up her eyes with a look of the wildest affright; while her cheeks grew dark, and pale as death. "Good Heaven of Heavens! What can all this mean?"

"Mean!" cried I, kneeling, and trailing myself after her, as she retreated. "Mean! that I am a wretch—the veriest wretch that crawls upon the face of the earth—and oh! that by a blast from that heaven you invoke, I could be crushed into the dust before your eyes."

I fell prone to the ground before her as I spoke, buried my face in the earth, and kissed her feet.

"Oh, dreadful!" said she, in a low tone, and sank into a chair.

So we remained a second or two. I, as one stupified, lying upon the floor before her. She, silent; but I could hear her quick convulsive breathing.

At last she seemed to make an effort with herself; and speaking calmly though in a very low tone, she said:

"Rise, Edmund. Let us forget all this. You have been wrong; but you have been surprised into expressions, which in cooler moments you never, never would have used to your Clarice," and here her tears began to fall fast.

"Rise, dear Edmund; let us think no more of this. I forgive you."

I was exhausted by the paroxysm of feeling; I felt stupified; I endeavoured to rise but I could not.

She bent over me and assisted me from the floor.

"Lie down, dear Edmund," said she, with great gentleness. "You will be ill.... Lie down again, dear Edmund."

I saw her face. Pity and sorrow there was. But, alas! the storm of passion on my part had met no answering feeling upon hers.... I felt this with a deep despondency.

I laid my head down, sighing heavily; and closed my eyes for a short time.

How had I been betrayed into the irrevocable disclosure? How had I been carried away in defiance of all my resolutions and purposes?

I had been false to Reginald—false to myself—false to her.

I at last turned towards her and said:

"Do I understand you, Clarice?"

"Do I understand *you?*" said she in a low tone, looking down, and her face crimsoning with blushes.

"I have no longer any hope," said I, in a tone of the deepest dejection. "You love another.... And I love in vain."

She was silent.

"Another!" cried I, bitterly. "Another!—and he, the friend of my bosom, the chosen and cherished of my heart! He, he has robbed me of my only treasure!"

"Do not say so, Edmund," said she, in a tone that surprised me by its steadiness. "He has robbed you *not*.—All, and more than the affection I ever felt for you, I feel for you now. Reginald is incapable"...

"Name him not!" cried I, passionately.

Her eyes fell again; this time she looked displeased as well as grave.

"Forgive me! Forgive me!" I cried, in a voice of agony. "Forgive me, Clarice!—Alas! I know not what I say."

"Indeed! indeed! I do forgive you, Edmund;" she was now weeping bitterly.... "Only tell me what —what I can do.... or say?" wringing her hands in much distress.

"Nothing,"—in a hollow voice.

"Oh, Edmund! How wretched you look! Dear Edmund! don't Edmund!—let us forget it all: let us love one another as we used to do.... Don't fix your eyes in that way, Edmund; don't look staring in that way, Edmund.... You will be ill again—Edmund!—Edmund!—look at me!"

I did.

But at that look she fell down on her knees by my couch, took my hand, pressed it, bathed it with her tears, hiding her face upon it, rapidly murmuring: "Don't—don't! don't be so miserable! don't look so miserable! Be happy again, dear Edmund!"

But I could not speak. If the fate of worlds had depended upon it, I could not speak. I could only gasp convulsively, while she continued to weep over and bathe my hand with her streaming tears.

"Alas! Alas! if I had known—I never thought—I never suspected. How could I. How should I?" But I withdrew my hand coldly, and said.... coldly I said it:

"Thank you, Clarice; but I do not want your pity."

"Oh! how very unkind you are," said she, sobbing behind her handkerchief, with which she was now wiping her eyes. "What can I do more?—What can I say more?...I am sure I would not make you unhappy, for the whole world, Edmund!"

There was no resisting this. Pride, jealousy, passion, gave way.

"Let us forget it, Clarice," after a violent struggle with myself to appear calm: I said, "forget all that has passed. Forget this wild hurry of my treacherous feelings. I did not intend it.... believe me I did not.... I intended, without betraying my own secret, to endeavour to discover yours. I meant it for the happiness of us all.... I have betrayed myself: I have done very wrong: forgive me!"

She continued sobbing like a child.

At last, she said,

"So long as we have known each other.... so long as we have loved each other.... I never thought."....

"Forgive me, Clarice! Oh! how could I be such a brute, such a selfish brute, as to make *thee* unhappy —my sweet! sweet Clarice?"

I was now consoling her.

Ready, glad was she to be consoled. Alas! in the innocence of her nature she little understood the wildness, the violence of the passions: credulous and guileless, it was possible for me to smother under its ashes that fierce fire which had blazed for a moment so suddenly and desperately forth.

I had learned her secret: all was over with me: my only anxiety now was, to restore her to her usual sweet serenity, and to recover my place in her friendship.

I in some degree succeeded. The heavy sobs abated, the sorrowful brow in some degree cleared; and though she looked still sadly at me from time to time, she gradually became tranquil.

She did not, however, take her work again; but sat quietly till Mrs. Fermor returned; when making some excuse, she hastily rose and quitted the room.

I asked for pen, ink, and paper; and while my temples throbbed as if they would burst, and my heart seemed to be dying within me, wrote the following letter to Reginald.

"The die is cast—the field is open for you. *Her* happiness is no longer in my power—in her own power. Ask no questions, for I have no answers to give. She is yours, Reginald. She loves you."

CHAPTER V.

Thou art my life, my love, my heart,
The very eyes of me;
And hast command of every part,
To live and die for thee.

HERRICK.

"*Reginald to Clarice.*

"HAVE you deigned to wonder, lovely Clarice, at the inconsistency of my conduct? Have you deigned to ask yourself why I have lately avoided, what I at first so anxiously sought? There was a fear; perhaps you have already divined it. There is a man I love more than myself, and honour beyond words; his fate might depend upon mine.

"I am now at liberty to speak; and here, before all that is sacred in heaven, or dear upon earth, do I throw myself before you, and kneeling in spirit, offer you my heart and hand. Take me, Clarice. Take a poor, honest, simple fellow who has only one merit to boast of in the world—that he knows how to love and value you.

"R. V."

The answer was in two words:
"My father."

These two words, inscribed in delicate characters upon a small morsel of paper, and directed in a trembling, scarcely legible hand, threw Reginald into a perfect ecstacy of delight.

Every thing he most desired he read in those trembling characters; he did not decipher the doubt, the anxiety that agitated Clarice. Perfectly ignorant of any cause whatsoever that could have diminished Mr. de Vere's regard for him, and bearing as he thought in his heart, the long-coveted object of his ambition, he had neither distrust nor fear.

Reginald was no coxcomb, but he knew himself to be clever, and unexceptionable in every way. Good blood flowed in his veins; his fortune was, though moderate, sufficient for the present; and he was heir to the very estate which Mr. de Vere had so long desired to see reunited to his family possessions.

No wonder that joy and exultation danced in his gay eyes. He beheld himself, not only a permitted, but a welcomed suitor: the harbinger of general satisfaction. He pictured the sweet brow of his Clarice, cleared of those clouds with which sympathy in her father's feelings had too often obscured it, happy as the means of gratifying her father's wishes, and gladdening with her smiles the hearts of all who adored her.

But first he must understand what his real position with respect to the estate of Mount Sorel was; for though he considered himself, and was by every one

considered as the heir, yet Mr. Higgins' opinions and ways of thinking and acting were so eccentric, so little in unison with the old world and its ways, and so entirely in accordance with that new one of which nothing at present could be positively predicated, that before he presented himself to Mr. de Vere as the suitor for his daughter, and bearing the expectation of that estate as one of his titles to favour, he must have an explanation with his father, and obtain some positive security for his hopes and expectations.

Mr. Higgins and Reginald, as may have been observed, were of very opposite characters, and took very different views of most things. The father was of a dogmatical and somewhat arbitrary temper, and Reginald might have found it difficult to maintain that manly independence of thought and action which every man, after a certain age, must and ought to maintain, had he not united excellent sound sense, and a discretion beyond his years, to the sweetest and gayest temper in the world. Added to this, he really loved his father extremely in spite of their divergence upon so many points. The spirit and originality of Mr. Higgins kept him perpetually interested and amused; and no doubt his own ways of thinking were, in many respects, considerably modified by the influence of this determined and positive mind.

So Reginald, what between his sweet temper which Mr. Higgins' roughest jokes could not disturb, the fearless sincerity with which he expressed his opinions, and the very warm and hearty affection which he felt for his father, got on extremely well; and father and

son, opposed as they were on many points, lived together in unbroken harmony.

The terms they were upon might however rather be called those of affectionate friends and brothers than of parent and child; and so much was Reginald accustomed to this mode of proceeding, that in the present instance he contemplated, rather the making an arrangement with his father for their mutual convenience, than that he should receive a benefit from his hands without offering an adequate return, as fathers and sons are in the habit of carrying it.

Mr. Higgins had been in London, and had only come down the night before. What his business might have been, Reginald was far too much occupied at that time to take any interest in inquiring. His father had departed, carrying with him all his young political tyros and disciples. Much was in agitation, and Mr. Higgins was the most ardent of agitators.

A radical reform in parliament was the cloak which covered, with many, designs of a far deeper nature. Men had been not slow to perceive what the simple doubling of the representatives of the Tiers Etat had effected in advancing the progress of the French revolution: it had, in fact, thrown the whole efficient power of the state into the hands of the democracy; and those who desired to see a similar state of affairs in this country, were quite aware that universal suffrage and annual parliaments would effect for England what the double representation and the union in one chamber of the States general had done for France. As is usual in such cases, the cry had an apparent justice in it. Theoretically

speaking, nothing could be more fair: in argument nothing more unanswerable.

The many, who after all are usually led by their hearts, and by the best part of their hearts (with the addition of a little corner of their stomachs), were captivated by the prospect of increased political action for the masses; and but a few saw where it was all to lead. To nothing in the least resembling the equality, and freedom, and happiness anticipated; merely, in fact, to the bringing down of A. to put B. in his place.

Both political parties did, in fact, regard the masses, much in the same way, as being as yet entirely incapable of consistent purpose or of self-government; as the slaves of imagination, enthusiasm, and passion; one thing to-day, another to-morrow. And those may be pardoned for this opinion, who at this very time witnessed the spectacle of one mob in Paris clamouring for liberty, equality, and the rights of man, while their brothers in Manchester and Birmingham were sacking and burning in honour of church and king.

The masses were the same: it was the same ill-regulated passion, and perhaps well-intended violence on both sides: the same they were then; the same, as yet, they have ever been; and mankind must progress pretty considerably before they will be any thing else. Wisdom, prudence, sound judgment, and self-discipline, being yet, it is to be feared, in the minority.

Many, however, as I have said, though not exactly forming part of what are styled the masses, were undoubtedly then planning a revolution in England on the model of that in France, and speculating

upon the establishment of a republic upon the pattern of that in America, in accordance with the principles maintained in the "Rights of Man:" a book which at that time exercised a marvellous influence over many who should have known better, among whom I must class myself. I was blindly and distractedly devoted to principles which I thought the common cause of human nature; and yet, blinded as I was by enthusiasm and passion, I could not help being tormented with sundry little uneasy feelings and suspicions—I could not help thinking I saw what yet I felt sure could not be. A certain arrogance; a certain despotism of opinion; a certain susceptible vanity; a certain contempt for the wishes and happiness of others, terribly inconsistent with the pure disinterested professions of these incorruptible patriots.

But to return to the present purpose. Mr. Higgins' interview with his son.

Mr. Higgins, on his return from London this time, was accompanied by a man most particularly disagreeable to Reginald. This gentleman was one of those political adventurers with which the times swarmed, whose purposes were directed to take advantage of the simplicity and vanity of his fellow-creatures in order to advance his own fortune and interests. Such was Margarott; such was Robespierre; such did Horne Tooke and many others, always appear to me to be. Our present subject was a small, rather ordinary-looking, black browed, black-eyed man, who affected the *sans culotte* in his habits and manners, and the bitterest contempt for all the delicacies and refinements of life: who eat, and

drank, and enjoyed himself, and talked of Cyrus and his Cresses: who advocated universal freedom of opinion and never would suffer himself to be contradicted: and declaimed upon universal equality, while he commanded the services of every domestic about him in terms and tones which few domestics in the worst of times would bear. His name was Perrott. Where Mr. Higgins picked him up, or what he could see in him, it was difficult to say; but that he exercised a very extraordinary influence over that bold and masculine understanding was certainly true; and that he flattered him in a way which would have sickened many a crowned king, greedy of flattery, as it was then the fashion to suppose kings *alone* to be, was manifest to every one. Perrott understood his man and his times to perfection. The dislike or disapprobation of Reginald or of others troubled him not a whit. He had entangled the great fly round whom his meshes were cast; the little ones were not worth his notice. I do not know, however, why I mention him in this place; his influence was as yet unnoticed.

Mr. Higgins was sitting in his own room writing letters when Reginald came in, and drawing a chair, sat down by his side.

Mr. Higgins took no notice of him for some time, and continued to write; and Reginald sat watching his pen. At last, having run off a paragraph as it would appear much to his satisfaction, the father made a sort of comfortable grunt, laid down his pen, glanced his

eye over the paper, pushed it a little away with a gesture that signified "unanswerable," and turning to Reginald, said,

"Well, my young one, and what do you want from me?...Something, I'll be bound. You young leeches never come to your fathers but for what you can get."

"Exactly so," said Reginald. "I am come to-day to get all I possibly can."

"Out with it then."

But that was not quite so easy. Reginald hemmed; blushed; hesitated; took out his handkerchief; put it in again; and then laughing, and recovering himself, said, "What a fool I am!"

"Is this your first discovery of that fact?" said the father.

"Oh no, Sir! far from it: only a fresh experience of it. What the deuce—can't I speak out. Can't I tell you, Sir, without so much stupid, blushing, stammering nonsense, that—that—that—why, in short, that the most natural thing in the world has happened to me, Sir. I am in love."

"Oh!" said the father.

Reginald felt a little abashed: but resolving to push on, with something of the feeling that plunge in we must, and flounder forward, or we are lost,—he said,

"The natural consequence of which is—marriage. The natural consequences of which are—certain pecuniary arrangements... Now it is all out, Sir."

"The name of the Dulcinea, if it please you."

"Clarice de Vere."

Mr. Higgins had looked all the time as if he was determined not to be surprised; but he started at this, and pushed his chair back a few paces.

"You don't say so?"

"Clarice de Vere," repeated Reginald.

"Clarice de nonsense, with her silly romantic Minerva Press name, and her high, haughty narrow-minded aristocrat of a father. Could you do no better, Sir, than fall in love—as you call it—*there*?"

"Sir, these things are not to be commanded... As I think I have heard some of the school say, 'Nature will assert her powers, and vindicate her rights, in defiance of the vain distinctions invented by the preposterous imbecility of man.'"

"Puppy! What sort of a girl is it?"

"Oh! I don't, in the least in the world, know."

"Not know?"

"How should I?"

"How should you?"

"Nay, Sir, if I were to describe her as I see her—as one of the sweetest, rarest, divinest! what would you say? Why, that I was blind, and doting, and a fool. And if love is doting, blind, and foolish, so I am: for I love her, oh! beyond words!"

"I don't think that is altogether so ill-reasoned, considering that you are a prating, pragmatical, conceited puppy," said Mr. Higgins. "Well, and what says her supercilious, highbred, long-pedigreed father, to the son of Mr. Higgins, of nowhere, and nobody?"

"I have not asked him, Sir."

"No!"

"No, Sir. *My* father is the person whose approbation and consent it most imports *me* to win."

"No doubt, no doubt, because of that third consideration mentioned in your exordium."

"Precisely so, Sir. How could I possibly be influenced by the shadow of a more affectionate or more generous feeling?"

Mr. Higgins looked sharply at him. "Thou'rt a sad pretender, Sir Reginald, I'm afraid; and a flatterer I more than suspect; and—no, I won't say, a hypocrite. That thou never wast, and never wilt be." There was a pause—at last, "Well, what do you want me to do?"

"Settle Mount Sorel upon Miss de Vere," said Reginald manfully.

Mr. Higgins did start now. Much as he loved plain speaking, he *was* startled at this straightforward manner of doing business.

"Settle—Mount—So—rel—up—on—Miss—de—Vere!" speaking slowly, and separating every syllable as he spoke. "And how do you know I ever meant to settle it at all upon yourself? I know no reason, young man, except the authority of the stupidest prejudices, which should make me prefer one man to another man, merely because he stands to me in the unavoidable relation of son. We do not choose our sons, Sir. If we did, probably few fathers and sons would remain united: and as for the rights of inheritance, descent, and all that stuff, you know I despise it. I hold my estate as my own, Sir; and if you want one, why you may *get* one. Is that my own in which I have only a life

interest? at the good pleasure of my son, who may go on hating and grudging every moment of his father's existence? Hateful and vicious prejudice! No, Sir, I shall do with my own as it seems good to me: I leave you at perfect liberty to do the same with yours."

"And this is my answer, Sir," said Reginald, with perfect self-command; but it was evident that he was taken quite aback. "But I had something to propose."

"Propose away."

"I have property, Sir, you know. I was going to propose an exchange."

"Oh! mighty well, Sir! I am willing to listen to terms; though I hold myself perfectly unshackled, free as air in the disposition of that which I call my own, and so intend to remain, Mr. Reginald. Yet, as you are not a bad fellow, I will give you every proper preference in things which I look upon as mere matters of business."

"My mother's fortune—"

"Yours, by the most preposterous of all human absurdities. The woman who loves should be allowed to endow the man she loves: not find all she possesses settled upon some unborn nonentity, the object of no rational interest. May be an idiot—a villain—a miserable outcast of nature—thus made master of thousands!"

"There are some prejudices," said Reginald, "of which I never, for my life, could discover the absurdity."

"Couldn't you? Ha, ha! You really could not. Why what a stupid blockhead you must be, Reginald."

His son smiled and bowed.

"Well, Sir," resumed Mr. Higgins, after another pause, "what do you propose to do with what you are pleased to call your mother's fortune?"

"Why, Sir, as you are not, I believe, very particularly attached to this house and property...."

"Why that's a monstrous lie, and you know it is, Reginald."

"As you are not very particularly attached to this property, I was going to ask you to give me up the house, the grounds, and just as many acres as the value of my property will be equivalent to, putting any fancy price you may think reasonable upon that which is given up to please my fancy," said Reginald. "I shall also consider myself as laid under an everlasting obligation by this indulgence."

"You will! Hem. And at what value, may I ask, Sir, do you estimate this same everlasting sense of obligation, which you are pleased to throw into your side of the scale as a make-weight."

"As it is to be everlasting, I should hold it to be inestimable," replied the son, quietly.

"Ha, ha! Well, thou art, as our French neighbours say, *impayable*, thou Jack Spratt. Come, I'll settle Mount Sorel upon Clarice de Vere—hang her ridiculous name—that is, if you continue to like her, and I contrive to like her, and I find that great beast of an aristocrat, her father, manageable. But mind, Reginald, you are *my* son, and *my* son was never reared to pamper, by base submissions, the arrogance of privileged pride. If Mr. de Vere can bring down his preposterous notions of his own ridiculous superiority,

so as to receive us as *men*—men as good, and perhaps ten thousand times better than himself—why, well and good; but if he looks to carry the high hand, and to condescend it, and to play the milord over me, I can tell him he's mistaken his man, and his time of day; and he's looking for six o'clock in the morning, at twelve o'clock at night."

"He is too much of a gentleman, I am sure, Sir, to afford the slightest reason for such an anticipation."

"Gentleman! Stuff! Don't let me hear *you* talking that namby pamby trash, Reginald. Say a *man*, if you will say something: say a reasonable being, if you must be talking. Gentleman!—nonsense! trash!"

"Too much of a man, then: too sensible and reasonable a man," said Reginald, correcting himself.

"I dare say....And so the first thing to be done to please this reasonable being—this *man*—is to indulge the childish fancy he entertains, as I understand, for his neighbour's estate; because, forsooth, some Tom, or Jack de Vere possessed it a couple of centuries or so ago; because there are a set of rubbishing old bones, and broken old tombstones, lying in a corner of it.... heigh, Reginald! This sensible man! alias this great, big, sulking child, must have its coral and bells, its hobby horse; or t'wont give t'other silly, lovesick baby *its* hobby-horse; heigh, Reginald!"

"Exactly so, Sir. Every one likes to ride his hobby horse if he can, I believe."

"He shan't ride me though," cried Mr. Higgins, vehemently, "he shall find *that*, I can tell him."

"I would not advise him to try," said the son.

"What! you think he would find it no very easy matter?"

"I am certain he would find it an impossible matter. No, father: that, at least, you were never intended for."

"But you think I am as fond to ride my *own* hobby as any of you?"

"Oh yes! certainly, Sir."

"And what is *my* hobby, you graceless fellow?"

"Nay, nay, excuse me, Sir.... However, one of your hobbys certainly is to delight people with pleasant surprises, as you have done me just now, Sir, about the settlement of Mount Sorel."

"Ha! ha! Catch you suffering yourself to be drawn away from a subject in which your own interests are concerned."

After indulging himself with a little more bantering, the father drew his chair to the table; and as he really loved his son, and felt in secret not a little gratified at the idea of so high a connexion, though he would never have forgiven any one who had dared to suspect him of so idle a piece of vanity; he authorised Reginald when he rode over, as he intended to do early the next morning in order to lay his proposals before Mr. de Vere, to make what use he pleased of Mount Sorel, telling him that if he liked to exchange his own property for a part of it he was at liberty to do so. He added, that as he believed he should seek in vain for a man who in these venal times would more want the support of adventitious circumstances than that paper brain his son; he thought the claims of philanthropy which call upon us to assist the helpless, might be as

well satisfied by taking care of him as of any other person; and therefore in all human probability what he saw around him, as well as all his father might die possessed of, would eventually be his own.

"Fair laughs the morn, and soft the zephyr blows,
While proudly riding o'er the azure realm
In gallant trim the gilded vessel goes."

Fair laughed that morn when Reginald Vernon, like some knight in an old story, rode forth a wooing. Sanguine of temper, light of heart, full of visions of happiness to be received, full of purposes of happiness to be bestowed, and in the full glow and spring tide of that first love which it is given to so few in this world to enjoy; he mounted his horse, and followed by his servant took the way to Holnicote.

I, meanwhile, had spent a fearful night. The great effort made, and justice done, it may be thought that to virtue I might have looked for my reward. Alas! it must be a virtue purer than mine that finds in itself its own rich recompense. Such imperfect virtue as mine had been, if virtue it could be called, rarely meets with any remuneration, and certainly little deserves it.

How little had I emulated the generous self-command of Reginald, a man in the general opinion of the world so far inferior to myself in all those more solid qualities; which are usually regarded as proofs of a well disciplined character! How had I broken every one of my resolutions! How had I disturbed the tranquillity of Clarice, and, in all probability given much useless pain to the generous heart of Reginald, simply

because I could not keep my determination! Hurried away by the vehemence of my feelings; I had madly betrayed a secret so little suspected by her; I had disturbed the tranquil confidence of her heart; I had marred the purity of our friendship. I had destroyed my last chance of earthly felicity; I was wretched, and I deserved to be so.

Such is the fate of characters that want strength.

I was graver, and quieter, and more silent than Reginald; every one thought I was, therefore, wiser; most people that I was better.—So judges the world.

I was as inferior to him in sense, in force of character, and even in judgment, I was as inferior to him in self-discipline, and self-sacrifice, as I was in all those ten thousand nameless charms and graces that the gods had showered so liberally upon him. But in one thing I would admit of no parallel: I would not believe it possible that the being existed who could love as I did.

My love had been with me as from the beginning of time; it had known no commencement, it had felt no pause; it had grown with my growth, and strengthened with my strength. The pretty baby I had adored with all that extravagance of adoration which the child sometimes feels for the infant; the girl I had loved with all the wildness of a boy's passion; the woman... she was more than all I had hoped, all I had anticipated. Had I never seen her before, I should have adored her from the moment of my return.

My mind is still troubled when I think of her. The frost of age, the long series of years, has not yet chilled my heart. Still it flutters and beats when I think of

those agonies; still it loves. She has long slumbered in the tomb of her fathers; but her image haunts me still. She walks even now round this table at which I write—pale as the fading primrose, as I saw her last. Her grave clothes are not round her, but long snowy garments wrap that angel form. On me she bends that tender pitying brow; on me, those eyes.... with that look of tender sadness, saddening to see me sad!...

Clarice did not appear in my room the next morning. I felt disappointed; yet I could scarcely expect her... I was getting better; actual humanity did not demand her presence; and after what had passed, was she likely to volunteer it? My sinking heart said no. And yet I would fain have persuaded myself that I had erased the impression of what had passed; that I had persuaded her to give another meaning to my passionate expressions; that she would think no more of it, and would visit me as before. But she came not.

I was alone; and I felt miserably desolate. I wandered from window to window, restless, and in a state of most supreme discomfort.

One of the windows looked out upon the park.

I heard the park bell ring, and the park gate open. Soon after, Reginald cantering up to the house.

All I remember is, that I drew suddenly back; I went and sat down upon the sofa, and with my elbows resting upon my knees, covered my face with my hands.

He was come, then! He would be with me in a few seconds. What would he say in answer to my letter? How should I be able to support the expres-

sion of his impetuous joy. I felt as if it would kill me. As if I could kill him! I was still too weak to bear excitement. My heart knocked at my ribs; my temples throbbed violently. I could hardly move or think. I sat stupified with emotion, struggling with the hysterical passion of poor Lear; for it was that which choked me. I was anticipating the moment when he should open the door, and his gay and happy countenance should contrast with my misery.

So I sat for some time, but Reginald came not.

Then I grew impatient. Why did he keep me in suspense? Why did he prolong my tortures? How thoughtless—how cruel! Why could he not come?

Suddenly the door opened..... but it was only nurse entering the room with my breakfast.

I felt relieved for the moment, and raising my head, commanded myself enough to say in my usual tone, "Did I not see Mr. Vernon ride up to the house just now? Why has he not been shown up stairs?"

"He did not ask for you, Sir," said nurse. "He only asked for master, and has been shown into his study."

It struck. I think I feel the blow to this hour..... When I die, the cicatrice of that wound will be found upon my heart.

As usual with those who inquired for Mr. de Vere, Reginald had been shown into his private room.

He had arrived so early, that the late, dawdling

breakfast at Holnicote was not quite over.... Clarice was still sitting with her tea before her, balancing a teaspoon on the edge of her cup, and prattling to my father, when a servant entered.

"Mr. Vernon, if you please, Sir, is in your room, and wishes to speak to you for a few moments when you are at leisure."

The spoon fell into the cup by a sudden spasm of the hand which held it, the little clenched hand and arm were pressed against the bosom as if to still the beating of her heart. Her head was half turned away, but in the attitude of one listening to what passed with intense attention; and once her eye glanced rapidly and anxiously at her father.

My father's eye, meanwhile, was fixed upon her. There was more than enough to have betrayed her secret to a far less penetrating observer.

My father sighed. In spite of his philosophy he could not but sigh, he could not but vouchsafe one sigh to the fate of his unhappy son. He could not but hallow with one sigh the immensity of the sacrifice!

Indifferent as he had shown himself to my happiness, he did vouchsafe one sigh to its final extinction!

But, good heavens! how I lose myself! Forgive me father! forgive me, honoured shade! Forgive the injustice of a passion, the embers of which are not even yet extinct!

CHAPTER VI.

La jeunesse se flatte et croit tout obtenir,
La vieillesse est impitoyable.
LA FONTAINE.

"I WILL wait upon Mr. Vernon immediately," said Mr. de Vere, finishing his last cup of tea. "But why will he not come in here—has he breakfasted?" and saying this he rose, and left the room.

Clarice had dropped her napkin, and she stooped rapidly down to pick it up, and when she raised her head again her face was crimson; then she sat looking at it, and folding it into every kind of fantastical fold; then she raised her head and glanced timidly at her mother; but her mother was looking over a new souvenir. Then she glanced at Mrs. Fermor; Mrs. Fermor was looking intently at her. She turned away her eyes; and feeling as if to be observed was not at that moment endurable; she rose and went to the window, and there she stood leaning with her face against the glass, as if looking into the garden. In the meantime this was what was passing in the study.

Reginald had felt excessively hurried and nervous

when he first came in, and he walked up and down the room endeavouring to recover his composure; stopping at times with a sort of trembling anxiety to listen for footsteps, but no sound reached him.

At last a distant door was heard to open, to shut, another and another; then quick steps were heard approaching, the door opened, and Mr. de Vere entered the room.

"I was told, Mr. Vernon, that you had business with me," he began, in just his usual tone and manner, "I hope I have not kept you waiting. We were in the breakfast room. Have you breakfasted? Breakfast is not yet over. Won't you take something?"

"I thank you," said Reginald, in a very hurried manner, laying hold of the back of the opposite chair, but continuing to stand, while Mr. de Vere seated himself, "I have—breakfasted."

"Has any thing happened?" said Mr. de Vere, observing his emotion. "My dear Mr. Vernon, nothing unpleasant, nothing unfortunate, I trust. I hope you believe that you may command my services."

It suddenly crossed his mind that a duel or some affair of that nature must be the subject matter of this very early visit, and very hurried application.

"Any thing I can do, my dear Sir—"

"Oh no! no!" said Reginald, divining his meaning, "nothing in the least of that sort. Oh no—I—I—I—" colouring, blushing, and stammering, "I do not know —I would venture—I would hope—"

Mr. de Vere sat looking at him in his fearfully cold composed manner, and did not say one word more to

assist in relieving his confusion. Reginald turned away his eyes, fixed them upon the floor, and then went rapidly on.

"The passion I have conceived—an attachment the strength and sincerity of which it shall be the purpose of every hour of my life to prove—though I am myself all unworthy. Yet if the tenderest desire for her happiness—the most fervent devotion to her welfare—a love, the first I have ever felt—a heart sincere as her own—may plead—"

"Is it possible that I can understand you, Sir?" said Mr. de Vere, at length measuring him from head to foot with a look of haughty surprise. "Or must I still continue at a loss to divine the meaning of this strange address?"

Reginald was himself again in a moment. He sat down in the chair which had till then supported his hand, and returning Mr. de Vere's look of astonishment, seemed on his side to be waiting an explanation.

They were both silent for a few seconds. At last,

"Excuse me, Sir," said Mr. de Vere, "I think I cannot have exactly apprehended your meaning."

"I came," said Reginald, with composure, "to lay my proposals before you, for the honour of Miss de Vere's hand. *That* was what, but for my childish embarrassment I should have made clearly understood from the first."

Mr. de Vere measured him again with his eye, but made no answer.

"I am fully aware of my unworthiness to form such pretensions" continued Reginald, in the tone of one

who expresses himself merely in the form common to lovers in general, but without the slightest suspicion of any absolute inferiority; "but who shall deserve *her?* I can only plead that if I am intrusted with the treasure of her happiness, my whole life and being shall be devoted to prove myself worthy of the confidence."

"Miss de Vere," said the father haughtily, "is infinitely obliged to you, Sir, for the honour of your good opinion, and for the interest you are pleased to take in her felicity. I flatter myself that for the present *my* cares may prove sufficient for its security, and that the assistance of any one, however adequate to the task, will not be required."

"Good Heavens! Sir!" said Reginald, surprised out of all his tremours and his forms by this speech, "what can you mean? and who do you take me for?"

"I take you for the son of Mr. Higgins, of Mount Sorel," with a bitter emphasis on the last word. "The last man, I should have imagined, that would have thought of addressing *me* in this most unacceptable manner."

"And why not? and why should I not?" cried Reginald, earnestly. "What have I done? what have I said? Has any one dared to asperse me to you?" cried he, firing. "Has any one injured me in your good opinion? For Heaven's sake, Sir! name the accusation and name the accuser. Faults and follies I have abundance of, no doubt; but still, I would fain hope I have done nothing that could really deserve to forfeit your good opinion."

He was still evidently far wide, and most stupidly

and innocently unconscious, of that mighty distance which in Mr. de Vere's opinion lay between them.

"I have heard nothing to your disadvantage, Sir," said he, with increased haughtiness. "Your character has never been commented on in my presence. I have always observed you to behave like a perfect gentleman, when you have been visiting your friend at my house. I beg to be understood upon this point. I have never...."

"Certainly, Sir," said Reginald, "it were the greatest presumption in me to suppose that I or my character could ever have been, till now, the subject of Mr. de Vere's attention or observation; but *now*, I would fain hope that *now* .... I might become an object—my conduct and character might become subjects of interest, even to Mr. de Vere."

"Not in the least, Sir. I am not accustomed to trouble myself about the proceedings of my neighbours."

"Doubtless; but now—now—may I hope—may I presume?"

"Presume nothing—hope nothing," said Mr. de Vere, and the red spot was kindling on his cheek. "My daughter is too young at present, to be the subject of conversations of this description; and were she not, I have other views for her."

And rising from his seat, with a stately, ceremonious air, he was preparing to leave the room.

But Reginald was not so to be answered. His spirit was high: he had pride, resolution, dignity, when the occasion demanded. He rose, and with a spirited air, said,

"If this rejection arises from my personal demerits, I have only to bow before it, and to deeply, deeply regret my own unworthiness. But, if it arise from ideas of social distinction which I have long been taught to look upon as exploded fables and prejudices, I can only say that I had given Mr. de Vere credit for a far more exalted and noble way of thinking."

"What do you mean, Sir?" cried Mr. de Vere, his eye kindling; and returning to his place.

"I mean what I say," said Reginald. "I despise such empty distinctions from the bottom of my heart, and I honoured you far too much to believe you their slave."

"Slave! empty!" all the blood of his noble ancestors coursing to his temples. "Do you hold cheap the possession of a long-descended, unstained name! It well becomes those who claim no such generous distinction to underrate it, and to endeavour to level it to the dust, with so many other sacred, time-honoured superstitions of the human heart! It well becomes you, Sir, and such as you, to despise that which you can never attain; and endeavour to brand with your miserable contempt, the glorious inheritance of long-descended honour."

"No, Mr. de Vere," said Reginald, "I can understand it, and I can respect it .... But what is it, after all? An idea, a breath! Shall that far more sacred thing, real, living, human happiness, be sacrificed to a phantasy such as this?"

"Trash of the day," said the other contemptuously, "the vile republican cant of the party who have swept down the sacred barriers of society, and deluged the

world with licentiousness and blood! Do you think, young man," eyeing him again, "that you approve yourself to *me*, by sophistry such as this? Carry your liberal opinions, Sir, if you please, where they will be more acceptable: among those who have every thing to gain and nothing to lose, by the topsy-turvy changes of society. We who have something yet left to defend, something still left to prize, will cling to the sacred relics of the past .... to honourable name and fame, things forgotten or unknown in this new world of yours."

"Unknown! I don't understand you, Sir," cried Reginald, now all on fire. "You do not mean to insinuate, you cannot dare to insinuate, that either my father or myself ever did, or were capable of doing, what could stain the name or fame of any man whatsoever... I loved your daughter—I sought her in all honour—I respected prejudices which I could not share .... I had hoped to have been allowed .... I had hoped through my alliance to restore long alienated possessions, long valued relics to that honourable name your daughter bears! My father, who has no sympathy with sentiments of this nature; who is a plain-spoken, direct, honest, excellent man; *condescended* to feelings he could not help regarding—as somewhat—as—in a very different light... he has given up the estate he valued for the sake of the son he loved, merely that that son might flatter himself... but it is all over now," and his voice began to tremble, and tears which he dashed fiercely away were blinding into his eyes. "Clarice! my Clarice! it is all over!"

Proudly and indignantly he turned away.

The father looked at him. Relentings were visiting his heart; wishes long subdued were rising fast in his bosom; prospects! hopes!—but pride mastered him.

He would not go back—he would not testify by word or look, that he *could* retract.

And they parted.

I had seen Reginald approaching the house with the speed of one impatient of his errand. I had seen him fling himself from his horse, and enter. The door had closed after him, other doors had closed, still he came not to me. I stood at the window leaning my face against the panes, in a kind of stupid mournful expectation of what was to happen next.

I looked out upon the sky. It was a gloomy, gusty, October day; the clouds, of a dusky Indian-ink tint, were hanging motionless over the heavens. No gleaming lights illuminated the landscape: all had that air of dreary monotony so oppressive to the spirits, type of that prospect which my future life presented.

But I could hardly be said to be thinking even of this; I was sunk into that sort of stupid melancholy, which seems to be marked neither by succession of time nor by succession of thought. I stood watching those heavy clouds, lazily moving before the moaning wind: insensible of all, but the weight of my misery.

Suddenly Reginald appeared. He came out hastily, and motioned in a quick impatient manner to his groom, who was leading the horses up and down on the gravel road before the house.

His air, his gesture, were not to be mistaken. There was a something even in the very motion of his arm, as he beckoned to his servant, which told me that he had not sped. He flung himself on his horse, and without once raising his head darted off at full gallop.

He had not sped: so far was certain.—But wherefore?

Had she refused him? Or had the prejudices of the father triumphed over all his better interests? My mind was all in confusion. I have said that the heavy clouds were a type of my feelings: had a sudden and violent gust, hurried forward the rack in wildest disorder, it would have resembled these feelings now.

Reginald, in the meantime, rode desperately on. He galloped through the park at Holnicote; the gates clanging together after him, rang in his ears as the knell of his happiness; the harsh iron notes vibrated behind him, as if to bar him for ever from paradise.

He started forward with fresh vehemence at the sound; but he did not turn towards home. He entered a lane which led up to the wooded district behind the hills of Mount Sorel and Holnicote, urged his horse up the steep ascent, and arriving at the summit of the downs, inhaled the fresh breeze with a sort of desperate delight, and galloped on like the wild huntsman in the fairy tale.

Again he changed his direction—swept down the steep descent, unmindful of the pebbles which flew beneath his horse's feet, and entering another lane by a long circuit, came, before he seemed to be aware of it, to the clear stream which separated the two estates. Horse and rider at once plunged in. The stream was

deeper than it appeared; but on they struggled, and up the opposite bank, and so through the woods which lay at the back of the house, and clothed that steep ascent. Through narrow, broken paths, struggling, slipping, scrambling, his noble horse carried him safely; and panting with the violent exertion, at length stopped at the back gate, which led to the stable-yards.

There Reginald seemed first to recollect himself. He bent down and soothed the harassed animal, whose fine coat streaked with foam, and his sides trembling and panting, testified to the violent exertions to which he had been urged; then dismounting, stroked and caressed the faithful creature; then threw his arms round his neck, hid his face against the favourite's panting side, and burst into a flood of tears.

Poor Reginald! his full heart swelling with generous and wounded feelings, he had no mother's heart, no sister's tender bosom to lean upon: there was no one but this poor dumb brute: his noble horse was his only friend.

The groom was now heard slowly approaching up the steep, stony ascent. Reginald lifted up his head, he could not utter a word. He gave a glance first at his horse, and then at the man, which said, "See his condition, take care of him," and then turning abruptly away, plunged into the dark woods...

The leaves were falling thick around him; the cold autumn wind was sighing among the branches; he walked gloomily forward, following the path which, narrow and intricate, led deeper and deeper into the thickets. He instinctively shunned his home....

How could he carry the news of his defeat to his rough and excitable father? whose pride, quite as sensitive as that of Mr. de Vere could be, though exhibited under so different a form, would resent with a bitterness he felt himself quite unequal to witness, the insult offered to himself and to his son. How, irritated as he felt himself to be, should he find temper to support his own share in the caustic sarcasms with which the intelligence would be received.

Long he wandered in the dark leafy labyrinth, inattentive to all but his own thoughts—now swelling with indignation; now melting to tenderness; now with that rising of the heart which attends a generous purpose defeated; now wild with those images of love, happiness, and Clarice, which crowd to the lover's fancy —till the path suddenly turning, brought him to the banks of the gleaming mountain stream, and he stood at the foot of the wooden bridge.

Soft and peaceful flowed the chrystal water. "Flowing river—flowing river," sings the Spanish love-song. And who that has ever known the agonies of a mind all at war, but has felt the soothing effect of that calm and never ebbing flow of sweet and gliding waters.

He stood upon the little bridge, leaning with folded arms against the rustic rail, gazing upon the varied streams and eddies which the waters playing with the mossy rocks and shining pebbles formed, as they flowed onward towards the vast ocean of their eternity.

And as he gazed, the proud swell of his heart subsided, and feelings of a softer nature took their place.

In the meantime Clarice had remained at the breakfast-room window, gazing vacantly at the sky; listening to every falling footstep, to every closing door which faintly echoed through the house.

At last she heard the hall-door open,—hurried steps crossing the hall. The door closed again with a loud bang, and there was the distant sound of galloping horses.

She turned very pale, and sat down, still keeping her face to the window pane.

A servant entered. "Is Mr. Vernon gone up into my son's room?" asked my father.

"No, Sir; he did not ask for Mr. Edmund. Mr. Vernon is just gone away."

Clarice rose, hastily passed through another door, and disappeared.

She went up to her own dressing-room; her poor heart fluttering so that she could hardly stand.... Would her father summon her? if he should, there she should be found.

She kneeled down before the deep window seat of her room, folded her arms, hid her face upon them, and thus, perfectly still, endeavoured to keep down the tumultuous throbbings of her heart, and prepare herself for the summons which she knew must soon come.

As she knelt, there passed before her mental eye as in a mirror, all that had happened between them. Those half-repressed tones—those accidental looks—that gay, kind expression, to her so irresistibly charming!... And the letter! that one precious letter! it lay close upon her heart.

He loved her. *There* was a rich consolation. Happen what would, he loved her: he had confessed it: he was hers.

She could not doubt, ignorant though she was of the usual proceedings in such cases, that her two words of answer had brought him so early to her father's house; but what could have passed between them, that he was gone and not one word to her?

She waited in her own room, until at last quite weary of suspense, she resolved to steal down stairs, and endeavour to gather intelligence of some sort.

She opened her door. Every thing was still as midnight; but to this stillness, oppressive as it too often was to her spirits, she was accustomed. Now however, it seemed almost awful. She shut her door again and sat down near it.

The silence was unbroken. Again she rose, opened her door, listened, and at last stepping out, stole as if she were engaged in some forbidden action, down the stairs. A shawl lay upon the banisters of the great staircase; she wrapped herself in it, intending to cross the back hall and go out at the garden-door; impelled by that vague desire to wander from place to place, with which we endeavour to cheat suspense.

The little back hall was separated by a short arched passage from the more extensive front one, the tall glass-door of the garden being exactly opposite to it. Some one was seen to pass; and, as she entered the back hall, the lock of the opposite door turned, and her father coming in from the flower-garden, confronted her.

"Oh, Clarice! are you there? I was looking for you," said he, with a carelessness not perfectly natural. "I thought I should find you in your hermitage. Come, you have your shawl on; step out upon the ter race; I have only three words to say."

She wrapped her shawl round her, and passed through the door.

He did not move forward to the open terrace, but stood where he was, under the shade of the bowers of clematis and roses, now straggling in the faded luxuriance of summer.

He looked at her, as she stood with changing colour before him; and a shade of displeasure, vexation, and anxiety clouded his brow. But accustomed to master his voice and gestures, nothing of this appeared in the tone, almost negligent, with which he said,

"I think it not right altogether to conceal from a young lady occurrences in which she has any concern —particularly as I suppose female vanity is in some degree gratified, by *any* affairs of this nature. You are certainly very young for such matters; but there has been a wooer in pursuit of you this morning."

Her eyes were bent to the earth in mute expectation —she did not even stir.

He looked sharply at her.

"Really," he said, with almost a contemptuous laugh, "I never saw a young lady receive such an announcement with more philosophy; but of course you can be under no doubt as to the answer."

Her dark eyes flashed upwards, and demanded what that answer was.

"Of course," said Mr. de Vere proudly, "to such proposals there could be but *one* answer."

Still the asking eye remained fixed upon his face.

He could not quite stand a something in that look: yet explanation of any sort he evidently was determined to avoid.

"I gave that answer," said he haughtily, "and Miss de Vere will be troubled with such attentions no more."—And turning abruptly on his heel, he opened the door and re-entered the house.

Like other proud, selfish men, there was nothing Mr. de Vere detested like a scene. Passion levels for the moment all human distinctions; there is nothing a proud man represses so instinctively as its external exhibition. The heart may bleed in secret: what is that to him so long as his dignity is undisturbed by those passionate truths which burst from the lips of despair.

Clarice too turned away. It was what she had expected, yet she felt stunned. She walked slowly on. The dark branches of the trees hung heavy over the gate at the end of the terrace, forming as it were the mouth of some black and silent cave; to fly from all human observation was at this moment the only wish she could distinctly form. Instead of going down the steps as usual to her hermitage, she passed along the terrace and plunged into the wood.

She followed the narrow winding way, only anxious to fly—to hide herself—to find some remote recess where she might yield to her feelings undisturbed.

The dark boughs closed over and around her as this light delicate figure glided along, her white dress visible

through the gloomy foliage which clustered around and overhead. She too, like Reginald, urged forward by the pain which seemed to centre about her heart.

At last, wearied with pushing her way through the tangled and brambly paths, she sat down upon an old mossgrown log in a part almost choked up with the dark copse, and resting her arms upon her knees again bent her head down upon them, while her beautiful hair, worn falling to the waist as was the fashion of that day, fell in showers of streaming tresses round her.

So she sat, never once lifting up her head. Stunned, stupified, by this sudden confirmation of her worst fears; this abrupt termination of all the hidden, flattering hopes, the sickly apprehensions, the happy visions; all that indescribable dream of devotion, tenderness, and sweetness, which is love in a young girl's heart. So she sat long; she did not shed a tear, she did not heave a sigh, she sat there stupified.

When women are in very great mental suffering, if they are not hysterical they are usually very still. The tenderness of their frame resists not, but seems crushed together by agony. They do not complain; they are, as it were, petrified.

A slight noise made her suddenly raise her head.

Leaning against a tree, and gazing upon her intently, there he stood. How different from what she had ever seen him before! His face was pale, his eye bloodshot, his hair in disorder. He was looking at her with a troubled, vehement, passionate aspect, but standing perfectly still. A faint shriek burst from her,

she covered her face with her hands.—And he was at her feet.

In what broken accents, with what a burst of tears and sighs and passionate exclamations and pathetic adjurations did the tale of his heart as in a torrent burst forth, as kneeling at her feet, her hands clasped in his, his whole soul of love was displayed before her. Oh, sacred, hallowed moment!

And how did her whole affectionate, feeling, kind heart melt away into warm floods of tears—how did that sweet, drooping head bend down, till that face was hidden on his shoulder.

Be one embrace permitted to honest love—to the first exchange of youthful hearts! And then they sat down side by side and hand in hand, in that perfect communion of the heart, that confidence unlimited, which succeeds to the first agitating moments of passion declared and confessed. The purest and most blissful moment of human existence was theirs, as, composed by this first burst of feeling, they sat and began to talk of what was to be done.

To be severed! to part! to tread the path of life separately! to have a view, a prospect, a plan, which did not centre in each other! seemed from that moment as impossible as if they had been united by the tenderest relations for years.

The strength of that tie—the sentiment of justice, right, duty, which unites two virtuous hearts which sincerely love and thoroughly understand each other—must have been felt to be fully comprehended: it can never have been comprehended by those who too often

so carelessly and so rudely endeavour to rend these holy bonds asunder.

To belong to any one but to each other, would now have appeared to each as the most wicked, as well as distracting of profanations; to unite their destinies was not only a beatitude but a duty. Still they were good and pious children, and they both felt that the parental tie was indefeasible: as sacred, if not as strong, as that which united them to each other. To defy their parents, to fly into revolt against those who had given them being, in those days the virtuous human heart shrank from it, as from a species of blasphemy. A blasphemy, than which one only would have seemed to them greater: the blasphemy against the heart by yielding it to another. Of this, at present however, there was no appearance of danger. The prejudices of their parents stood between them and and happiness; but there was no reason to apprehend an attempt to exercise that last and harshest tyranny, the endeavour to force upon either the misery of other ties. To love one another, so far seemed permitted to their hearts. To seek a happiness beyond this, unless hallowed by a father's blessing, was what they both revolted from. At least to Clarice, such rebellion appeared as an utter impossibility; I believe I must not say quite so much for Reginald; for unquestionably had there been the remotest reason to hope that Clarice would have jumped out of the window, he would have had little scruple about holding the ladder; let her father rave, or his ridicule, as much as they pleased.

Still he loved his father as I have said, and he really did feel desirous not to act in defiance of their mutual parents.

His great difficulty was this; his certainty that the slightest surmise of the insolent refusal his son had that morning met with, would render Mr. Higgins perfectly intractable. To conceal this circumstance if possible, for the present at least, seemed absolutely necessary.

They sat talking together of their parents: of those so near and dear: these two, who a short time before —nay, an hour before—were as strangers.

And how affectionately and kindly did they speak of those whose follies and faults were about to separate them! How tenderly did that dear Clarice approach the subject of her father's failings! How anxiously throw the pious, softening veil over the harsher features of his character.

And how did Reginald paint his father—the man so rough, so unthinking, so careless of wounding or irritating him! How did his affectionate heart picture him, till she almost began to love him.

Still the subject returned; what were they to do?

"Consult Edmund," proposed Reginald.

At that, a crimson flush passed over the face of Clarice.

"Edmund! oh, no!"

Reginald looked at her; but he was silent, and he sighed. They were both too delicate to allude to that one subject. Poor Edmund's feelings were sacred to them both.

"Then," said Reginald, "I shall apply to Mr. Lovel

as a mediator. He is a sensible and amiable man; he will stand between your father and mine; he will reconcile all these difficulties and contradictions. Depend upon it, my Clarice, he will," stooping down, and kissing the hand which he held, and the gay smile of hope and happiness again lighting his charming face.

And now he began to talk of Mount Sorel. He told her how kind his father had been upon the subject; he spoke of his own happiness in the idea of being through her the means of restoring to Mr. de Vere's family the possessions he had so passionately coveted; and the smiles of hope and pleasure played upon her pretty face once more, and made her look sweeter than ever.

At length the unwearied sun began to travel so very fast towards the west, that Clarice became aware how long she had delayed. She rose to go; they strolled through the wood quietly together, and a few paces before they reached the boundary they parted.

But first, with a sort of holy solemnity, did these two young creatures draw each from a finger a ring; and with that deep and sacred feeling with which true love—the most sacred thing upon earth—rivets the heart of man, did they solemnly exchange the type of union; and while he pledged himself by deep and passionate declarations, she, looking down with gentlest modesty, repeated in a trembling but most fervent voice, a vow as true and strong.

And so they parted, she passing upwards to the terrace; and he, plunging into the deepest thickets, was soon hid from her sight.

CHAPTER VII.

Under the shady roof
Of branching elm, star proof,
Follow me.
I will bring you where she sits,
Clad in sweetness, as befits
Her deity.
Such a rural queen
All Arcadia hath not seen.

BEFORE I proceed further, I will here lay before you a short manuscript which came into my possession a long time after. I insert it here at this pause in the destiny of us all, in order that, thus revealed in her most secret feelings, you may become better acquainted with Clarice.

I have described her as she appeared to me; you will now judge for yourselves. These few lines will also enable you, in my opinion, to understand better than by a more elaborate description, the sort of characters with which she had to do; and the monotony of the life she had led during the years intervening between my departure for the continent, and her first meeting with Reginald.

No doubt that solitude and that monotony contributed to render her feelings more intense; for of all admirable recipes for preventing young ladies becoming the victims of true love, commend me to the present fashion of dissipating their minds by a never ending succession of pleasures and parties. A plan most peculiarly adapted for preventing any one feeling or idea obtaining an undue prevalence.

"I do not suppose that I am less happy than others; it seems wrong in me to complain; indeed, I do not mean to complain, but since Edmund went away how dull Holmicote seems.

"And yet, what a beautiful place it is! how lovely is the garden as I look upon it out of this hermitage, in which I now sit writing! How blue the sky! how bright the trees and flowers, all expanding fresh and joyful under this bright sun of May! Then the little birds are singing! Why cannot I be joyful? Why is it no longer with me as when I was a little child? Every thing used to make me happy then. I could play for hours, building castles of pebble stones. It is a pity that I cannot do so now, for I sadly want something to do.

"I could wish I were like one of those *sœurs de la charité*, whom Mrs. Fermor was talking of yesterday; I should be so happy to tend the sick, to help the miserable; so glad to have an object—to do some good

in the world. Any thing would, I think, be better than this idle, useless existence.

"Sometimes a gay spirit seems to come over me, and I long to run about, and to laugh and play with any thing. There is only the little dog: when I was a child I could play with Frisk by the hour, but I now want something that can *respond*.

"How kind every body is to me! My dear mother! —how gentle, how good! how careful that I shall escape every possible injury! I think, like the tender husband in 'Hamlet' she would shield me from the very winds of heaven. And yet how perverse am I. Very often, when it rains and blows, I long to wrap myself in a cloak, and run out and face the storm—merely, as it seems to me, for the love of braving it. This must be original sin; surely nothing was ever so perverse.

"Mrs. Fermor, too, so gentle, and so wise! What an invaluable friend have I found, where others only find a governess; and yet I could wish she were pettish, cross, unreasonable, uncertain—any thing for a change. I could fancy that even to bear ill-humour; to manage it; to fight with oneself when irritated by it; to vanquish it by goodness... Oh, how interesting!

"If I might but go out—if I might but go into the cottages. The other day, as we stopped in the carriage near the old schoolmistress's, I put my head out of the window while my mother was talking to the apothecary,

and what a busy hum of little voices there was! It sounded as cheerful as a bee-hive; which I think is the only *very* cheerful thing we have in this garden. Such a crowd of little children upon the benches; and such a dear, droll, wicked-looking urchin, standing leaning against the door—staring so hard at the *grand* lady, as I dare say he thought me. Poor grand lady! Oh! I did long to get out, and go among them all; but when I asked my dear mother, she was afraid of the small-pox, she said, and the apothecary seemed to think it *such* a risk! How do other people do? Why does not the apothecary get the small-pox?

"I wish I could have painted that dame's school—its low thatch, and the pigeons upon it, and the sparrow-bottle at the gable, and the casement, and the old door, and the border with marigolds, and the apple-trees all in blossom....

"I told Mrs. Fermor all about it when I got home, and she showed me such a pretty poem on this subject—Shenstone's 'Schoolmistress.'

"She did not seem displeased at my wild wish to run about like the rest, and be busy and useful; for she smiled and she said, 'Not yet my dear, you are too young and too precious to your parents. You cannot be allowed to run risks, however slight; but be not discouraged my dear Clarice, preserve your desire to be useful, resist the pride and the indolence common to your circumstances, be ever my simple, generous, good Clarice. The time will come my love, depend upon it, when you may be as busy and useful as your heart can desire.'

"If I felt sick myself it would be something to do. Oh dear! I never shall fall sick; though I think my head aches sometimes, which it never used to do; and sometimes I feel so idle and good for nothing.

"I think it is a great pity we go so little out a visiting. Visiting is not very amusing to be sure; those dinners are so grand and so formal; and then sitting all in a circle as we do, with our fans in our hands, and we young ladies looking as if we were afraid to speak before all those grave, grand elders—I am sure I *am* quite afraid. Then when I do go out I come home vexed with myself, wondering what I was afraid of, and resolving that I *will* try next time to make a little acquaintance for myself.... but it is such a long while before that next time comes, that I have forgotten all my resolutions and am just as much frightened as ever.

"Then it is such a long, long way from Holnicote to every place but Mount Sorel, and we shall *never* visit there. Ah! that Mount Sorel! it has been an evil neighbour to us. Ever since that unfortunate disappointment, my poor father seems never to have been quite himself. It may be that I am grown older and observe better, but I think that he did not use to be *quite* so serious, quite so austere before. Poor papa! I wish I could comfort him; but since this sad affair I think he loves us all less, I feel sure he loves me less.

"I am afraid there is something very bitter in his feelings which I cannot in the least understand; but we are made so differently. I think I would not care where I lived or what I had, if I only lived with those I

loved, and that loved me. I would be as merry as a lark if I might run about in the sweet sunshine.... And yet, do I not live with those I love and that love me? and am I merry as a lark? But it does not seem to me *quite* the same thing, I must say. I am so young—quiet seems to kill the young. Look at Frisk and her puppy: the puppy *must* play, Frisk never wants it. But I ought to be more reasonable.

"A letter from Edmund! What an interesting letter! How much he has seen! Those Alps! how awful! And Italy! Then Paris! What strange, wonderful scenes! Yet how angry the subject makes my father! I don't understand it—but who can help being glad that that horrid prison was destroyed.

"Alas! my father! His spirits, we have too much reason to fear, are beginning to give way. His long solitary walks are longer than usual; and he comes back with so deep and settled a cloud upon his brow, that it makes one miserable to look at him. He sits down in his chair, and seems often so absorbed in his own thoughts that he does not hear when we speak to him; indeed, I seldom venture to do that; I feel as if to address him first, is hardly respectful. But I wish it were natural to feel less awe of one's father. I long to sit down by his side, and fondle him, and prattle to him when he is so gloomy .... I am sure when I am gloomy, a little tender foolishness of this sort does me so much good!

"I will force myself to be less afraid of him.

"Oh then, dare I allude to it? No, turn your eyes, poor child, away. Alas! how bitter must be that rankling wound which can produce such harsh expressions! I suppose it is quite impossible for a character naturally so gay and careless as mine, to understand the depth and the force of *some* disappointments.

"Hatred! Oh, what a dark, awful thing is hatred! The Lord seems to have created us all to *love!* How natural it is to love! Every thing loves; every thing breathes love; one loves every thing. Where then comes hatred? Oh, from what deep pangs of the spirit must it be born! My poor, poor father! What he must have suffered before he could come to this? Poor Mr. Higgins too! I cannot see that he did wrong in buying Mount Sorel. How could he possibly know.... yet I think I feel in part what my father seems to feel so acutely. I don't feel as if I liked him *quite* so well, because he happens to have been the cause of a disappointment felt so severely by my father. Now, if I am so very unjust who have not half my father's sensibility to suffering, ought I to wonder at him?

"This Mr. Higgins does seem to be a rough, conceited sort of a man; so it is not to be wondered at that my father, so polished and refined as he is, should dislike such a person; but why does he care about him? We shall never see him; and as Mount Sorel, alas! is gone for ever, what matters it who has it?

"Good Heavens! Old Steevens tells my mother they have discovered lead mines at Mount Sorel; there will be a steam-engine he fears....

"My father was to-day like a .... Oh, there are moments when we all forget ourselves! Poor, poor papa!....

"It made me cry a little to-day. I could not help it; but I bent my head down, and I am sure nobody saw it. He says he shall be smoked out of Holnicote; that he will leave the country, sell Holnicote, change his name; that all things are changing; that every thing that the world was wont to reverence, is trampled under foot by a vile, upstart, envious, republican crew, who only desire to pull down every thing mankind have agreed to hold sacred, in order to elevate their own miserable pretensions upon the ruins; that their cry of universal philanthropy is a wretched pretence; their love of liberty a hypocritical mask for the most desperate tyranny over the opinions of others. 'The glory of Europe has departed for ever,' was his emphatic termination; and that for *him* there was nothing left in this desecrated world worth living for.

"One cannot help crying a little, to think that one cannot do the least in the world for the happiness of one's father. Father! sacred tender word, at which my own heart melts with love and reverence. Nothing: no, all my poor little heart can give... alas, it is nothing. Poor papa! He bursts out almost fiercely sometimes; but then he checks himself instantly. When my mother casts down her eyes in that sad, suffering way, it seems to provoke him. I try to look up and to answer him now and then with my eyes. It seems to me that a great deal that he says, though it is said in

too violent a way, is in the *food* true. I think this sort of sympathy he will accept, even from me.

"Again a long, long pause. Pen, you are no longer a companion to me. There was a time when I could fly to you, as to a little kind friend who received all the outpourings of my heart. But life becomes too serious for such dallying. I want a real friend, who can answer my doubts, and resolve my difficulties.

"Mr. Lovel, too, is gone to Paris: now there is no one left. Every body's thoughts seem fixed upon that terrible Paris.

"My father and I are become almost companions; that is to say I sit with him, or rather he sits with me, more than he used to do. He sits in the room while I embroider. I lift up my head and listen when he talks. To talk does him good; any thing, any thing is better than that dreadful silence.

"Again a long pause. My life is devoted to one purpose, to tranquillise these fearfully uncertain spirits. Sometimes I am so happy as to succeed: sometimes, alas! alas! the infection seems creeping over myself. My own spirits at times give way—dark apprehensions; shadows of coming evil; dislike of life, young as I am; abhorrence of exertion; weariness of employment; and a sense of the utter uselessness of all. If I should grow like my poor father, what will become of him? I see he depends upon me for so much. Oh! that they would some of them come back from that Paris.

"What an event! Edmund is come back! How strange that he did not let us know! To think of stumbling upon him in this way.... I had been more sad than usual that morning. I am afraid I had been crying, a *very* little, in my own room. When we were all in the coach I saw Mrs. Fermor looking anxiously at me; but I don't mind *her*. She knows I am weak and foolish now and then, and she is so good about it; but my father and mother must never see it.... Well, I rallied as well as I could, I really did exert myself, and I began to talk of Edmund, and when he would come back—when lo! as we turned by the low churchyard wall, there at the gate of Porter's field he stood. Dear, dear Edmund! What joy!

"There was another young man with him.... Our Edmund is not much improved in his personal appearance, though he has got a certain air of fashion which he had not before he went abroad; but he is grown larger, I think, and his air of fashion and his large limbs don't quite—but perhaps, all is comparison, and he did not look so well because.....

"How excessively charming some people look! What can there be in mere appearance so inexpressibly delightful? Some people's looks seem to promise so much! Seem to promise *every thing!* Wit, spirit, truth, gentleness, tenderness, elegance, goodness... how unaccountable! What is in this little face of man, that makes one so infinitely different from another? Charm—charming: well, I never knew the real meaning of that word before.... One uses words

so heedlessly. *Charm*— yes, like witchcraft: a sort of irresistible power which one human being exercises over another.... I never saw my father appear so much pleased in my life—he is so very fastidious; but it is the very nature of fastidiousness to be very much pleased indeed, when one is at last pleased....

"Dear Edmund! they none of them thought so much of the joy of meeting him, as if he had come alone.... Dear honest, foolish, uncalculating Edmund! we really could not... much as we love you. I say *we*, for I am afraid I was as much engrossed with the stranger, though I did not seem so, as any of them.

"How foolish I am!—as soon as I got into my room I walked straight up to my glass to see how I looked. I wonder whether I am pretty. I used I recollect, when I was little, to be called a little beauty... but some say I have lost that now. That's a pity: it must be very pleasant to be so beautiful: to be so beautiful that every one who looked at one must love one at first sight, like the fairy-tales.

"I have no colour, and when I look in the glass, there is a dull, stupid sort of look; but I never used to care for all this: am I growing more foolish as I grow older? How should I like to have some dear, kind sister now?... and I should run to her and say, 'But tell me, dear Mary,'—yes, it should be Mary, 'am I so *very* ugly?' and she would laugh and say, 'La, Clarice! I always think you prettier than any body else; —though nobody would call you beautiful, I suppose.'

"Ah! such a brother! such a friend! such a pro-

tector! such a guide! such a companion! Heavens, what a paradise would life become! I should like to be very, very poor, and to cook for him, and to work for him, and to do every thing in the world for him—just as the women in the cottages do. How one's heart would beat when he came home! and there was a tiny, beautiful little supper, set on the little round table; and a snow-white cloth; and the little casement open; and the sweet smell of flowers coming into the room; and the robin singing... and he in the great carved old-fashioned armchair of state, as they have them in the cottages about here, and I on a low stool by his knee—yes, it should be a low stool; for the man is the royal being, the king in his own household, and the woman should be lowly and gentle....

"Nonsense! romance! stuff!—I would burn it; but I will keep it to read twelve months hence, and I hope I shall find by that time I am a little less foolish.

"Oh! what a delightful—delightful day! It has been clouded at last, to be sure; but nothing can prevent its having been a charming day.

"Now I understand what they mean by society, which I used to think they made such a fuss about. Yes—that *was* conversation; that *was* society.... So excessively agreeable as they all were.

"My father, I never saw him so agreeable; Edmund, so excessively improved by his travels. My mother, Mrs. Fermor, every one of them..... I think I never met with any one who made one feel so agreeable;

he seemed to enter into what one said before one had scarcely said it.... to understand one so. And such a pleasing, artless manner of saying such clever things! As I sat by my father looking at that map of Rome,—oh! that *was* happiness! Certainly, society is the true happiness of life. I was not mistaken when I longed so for the society of those of my own age. I don't know how it is, but they have a way of thinking and feeling that harmonises, as it were, with one's own;—one plays in the same key. How my heart beats!—I will write no more, but ring for dearest Taffina, and go to sleep.

"Poor—poor Edmund! He is, I fear, dreadfully ill. Perhaps my dear father's way worried him last night. Dear Edmund! he has so much feeling; but I hope now he will understand that there will be a little abruptness, and he will soon be used to it.

"For myself, I was almost glad to see my father so vexed at first that Reginald was the son of Mr. Higgins; it showed how much he cared for him.... and what can it signify? what can it matter whose *son* he is, as long as he is himself? We were all a little startled at the announcement at first. How absurd! what foolish and unjust prejudices we have all nourished against this Mr. Higgins! They *must* be very absurd, for how can the father of such a son be a disagreeable man.

"I will write no more of my thoughts. I see what

image rises to my mind—what name hovers at the end of my pen.

"No; it is better in such a case to resist the too dangerous pleasure—even to write his very name, is a pleasure too dangerous for my peace. Whither have I strayed? Whither has this weak and foolish, foolish heart led me? Insidious, treacherous, but ah! too sweet deceiver! *My* heart, alas! it is mine no more. Stop, faithless pen—have done—hide *that* secret from every mortal eye..... What, even before he has uttered one syllable..... Is it possible? But, then, who might not be deceived by the expression of his eyes!

"Ah, miserable! He shuns me; he seeks me no longer. He cannot... no, it is impossible... he cannot have detected... he cannot dare to pity me, he would not presume... no; comfort thyself, poor heart, thy secret is yet thine own... that melancholy sweetness in his voice when he does speak, tells... at least it tells that he is not arrogant, but himself unhappy.

"Good heavens! Gracious Providence! I thank thee —I thank thee. That was all I could even think, as I fell back in my chair breathless... my heart was so full, so overflowingly full. I see dark clouds; I am filled with terrors. My heart is wild with all sorts of unimaginable fright; but he *loves* me! I sank upon my knees; I thanked the Author of my being, who had created His poor creature for *this*. Thanked Him! how can I thank Him? How pour out the full, full

gratitude of a heart that longs to show... alas! what but fervent prayers and thanks can I offer, for this one full moment of boundless content. If I die to-morrow, I have lived enough.

"Well, be it so; be it so; the course of true love never *did* run smooth. Oh, what are all its pains and sorrows now! My dear, dear father! Oh, you are stern, you are a little unreasonable; but I know you. There *is* a heart; you *will* yield; all will be bright and beautiful, life one rapturous dream. *My* Reginald—*my* Vernon—my *Reginald* Vernon—yours—your Clarice—your own Clarice—your constant Clarice—yours for life—yours for eternity—inseparable—undividable—for ages, and ages, and ages, and ages.... I am not afraid to write now. I am his betrothed wife. Betrothed by this precious exchange of rings—in that sweet, sacred, solitary wood. There we sat, and there we talked of all. All is in darkness and uncertainty before us, but what of that? Beautiful image of truth, and hope, and constancy! fair gem! that closes, as it were, this little ring; image of ever-flowing, and revolving, and endless time; thou shalt convey to my heart, the faith, the hope, the certainty, that he who has knit the tie, will never, never suffer it to be severed. Severed! What on earth can sever *our* hearts?"

Such were these feelings. Do you any of you heed how it went with me?

You sympathise with these innocent and tender lovers. Your fervent blessings, your ardent wishes for their success and prosperity, are crowning their heads. Who cares for the poor, blighted, miserable Edmund? Who cares to look into *his* heart, and see how it was with him?

It is, indeed, a dark unsightly picture. A human heart so utterly forsaken: a human prospect without one ray of light, from around or from above, to brighten it! All before me one scene of gloomy desolation. Existence robbed at once of all its interest; the future a blank; the sweet recollections of the past empoisoned; my being shattered at its very centre.

Ah! fain would I, in this desolation of the soul, have turned inward to seek those sources of consolation which all that was external denied. Fain would I have sought in my own mind for that peace, for that support, which there alone I could hope to find!

But to turn inward! to review the state of my own spirit! to seek there for better hopes, more serious purposes, deeper interests; alas! alas!—what a prospect was revealed!

What dark confusion of ideas upon all, which, in the destruction of his mortal objects, can alone render existence tolerable to man! Upon all which can render even mortal objects truly interesting; can alone give consistency to life, interest to action; and that cheerful, internal peace and courage, which bears him through every scene of anguish and desolation, "making the wilderness to flourish like the rose."

With every principle, moral and religious, unsettled; seeing in this vast universe little but a succession of accidental events, the result of blind and fortuitous forces; having lost that clue which alone can guide to the end the purpose of the mighty labyrinth; all was but as a mighty maze, and quite without a plan to me. I was as one who read the glorious epic backward, as it were, or by confused snatches, which hid the grand moral and the wondrous meaning! One for whom, God, the centre of moral truth, was not; for whom God, the father of the universe, was not; for whom God, the merciful, all-seeing Providence, was not; for whom God, the fountain of love and the great source of virtue, was not! For me, when the support of earthly joy and earthly interest was destroyed, what remained? Philanthropy. But who can feel much interest for the ephemeral being of a day? Man, as a being created for a successive progress and eternity of action, is the inestimable, priceless jewel of the universe..... As the mere accidental phenomenon of the hour; here to-day, and gone in a moment; what is he? Valueless as the clay which sounded in poor Trim's hat as it fell.

To him whose mind is thus darkened, unspiritualised, and debased, what remains but egotism? What, but the endeavour after those things which alone to him appear real? the enjoyments of this life, such as they are. Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. Let us snatch and empty the hasty cup of enjoyment..... something, at least, will thus be secured. Joy is

at least a reality, short-lived as it may prove. When we fall into the eternal sleep, we shall at least have had that.....

That it was a *Godless* revolution, was the grand fundamental reason why the French revolution was such a sensual, selfish, and bloody revolution. At the very moment when the bonds of human authority gave way, and when man, restored to freedom of action, more than ever required the restraints of principle and virtue; at that very moment all those deep fundamental truths on which every principle of duty and virtue must ultimately rest, were overthrown and lost. Ignorant of God, and fearless of man; no power around or above to restrain the outward violence or the secret sin.... what were the desperate cruelties and the vile indulgencies of those two or three abominable years! But I return to my task, which is to note down the influence of such sentiments and such teachings upon one young and naturally honest heart.

That they did not produce actual vice, I may probably thank circumstance. The misery they tend to produce, was all my own.

All men, the best of them, are selfish in love matters, says our incomparable Charles Dickens. All men are prone to be, say I, but all men are not. Reginald could be generous, I could only be selfish. Had my mind been purified and raised by higher motives, by juster views; had I received my inevitable disappointment, as a man and a Christian ought to have done; had I only learned to subdue my passions; to look forward, to consider more seriously the purposes of existence; had

my mind been filled with the vast elevating views of God and of eternity; it is not possible that this disappointment, however severe, should have desolated my mind in the manner it did. Peace *must* have ere long been mine; I should have bowed to that irreversible necessity, which those who read aright read as the finger of God; I should have submitted to the demanded sacrifice; I should have done what must be done, as it ought to have been done. But as it was, I acted by halves; "would not play false, but yet would wrongly win;" and I reaped the misery which falls to his share who cannot walk upright.

When I saw Reginald ride back, and divined by his gesture and attitude how he had sped—knowing as I did that the happiness of so many was concerned in the event, why could not I, like an upright and virtuous man, achieve a triumph over my own selfish feelings, and generously forward that which I knew ought to be forwarded?

Such was my decline in virtue, under the influence of my new and selfish principles, that the mere fear of pain was sufficient to keep me silent and inactive, not having even a hope to realise felicity for myself.

Despise me and hate me as you will, such is, I maintain, human nature in the general; when unsustained by those higher and more noble principles of action, which I hold to be as essential to the true growth and best excellence of the soul as the free air of heaven to the development of the human body.

Once or twice it crossed my mind that I would myself speak to my father; would lay the whole truth

before him, and entreat him to use the influence he possessed to overcome the innumerable prejudices of Mr. de Vere. But I could not. A sort of lingering hope, at least the reprieve of a delay, were mine. I said to myself, "Who would hasten the moment of his own torturing execution? Who can be called upon to sacrifice his own peace to that of another? Why should I be so busy constructing a temple of felicity out of the ruins of my own?"....

All that long, painful day I spent almost alone, in a sort of stubborn, gloomy resistance to those more generous and benevolent purposes, which would make themselves a voice in my heart.

But I would not—I was obstinate. I was resolved not to make myself the dupe, as I thought, of romantic notions of virtue and self-denial.... I adhered to my resolution.

The next day it was too late to change it.

CHAPTER VIII.

And a word spoken in due season, how good is it!
PROVERBS.

"*Reginald Vernon to Mr. Lovel.*

"MY DEAR MR. LOVEL,

"I will not begin by making apologies for addressing you, because, though I am quite aware that I have not the slightest claim to the good offices on your part which I am about to ask, I cannot help feeling persuaded that you are one whose good offices are governed more by wants than by claims. And never man had greater need of assistance than I have at this moment. Perhaps it will not be necessary for me to explain my present situation with respect to Miss de Vere. You are probably by this time, well aware that I have made proposals for her hand which have been rejected; but of two circumstances you have probably not been made aware. That I had reason to hope before I made the offer of my hand, that I had already obtained an interest in her heart: and that my father

has promised to settle Mount Sorel upon us, and to put us into immediate possession. You know I am a very blunt, plain-spoken fellow; I am quite sure I respect you far too much to trouble you with any vain or superfluous expressions of unworthiness, and so forth, usually thought proper upon these occasions. I will only say, that if I can be so blest as to obtain the hand of Clarice de Vere I believe I can make her happy.... I am sure at least I shall do my best, and I don't understand why a good-natured young fellow like myself should not succeed.

"As for those objections on which, if I understand aright, the positive rejection of Mr. deVere was founded —I confess it is not easy for me to comprehend them. You know, Sir, that I have not been captivated with the levelling principles of the day: just or not, they have not been able altogether to approve themselves either to my understanding or to my taste. I feel myself still inclined to respect what man has so long agreed to reverence; and the claims of a long unblemished descent are among those delusions, if they be delusions, with which I can at least sympathise. But still in these times it surely is too late—it is become impossible to worship such ideas with that blind idolatry, which has been known in former days to exact, at times, the most painful and unnatural sacrifices .... There is reason in all things, says the proverb; and most assuredly at this moment every body seems inclined to look for it. The reason for the prejudice in favour of a high descent, I take to be the idea that more elevated views, and a more perfect refinement of man-

ners and of principles should be the attribute of those who, through a long unbroken line, have received the inheritance of honour, virtue, and excellence. It is supposed, and I think justly, that indelible associations are, or ought to be thus formed, with all that is noble in man's nature; and that the character even of the very child is thus habituated to despise every thing that is mean, ignoble, or grovelling. Whether these ideas be truths, or whether they be prejudices, they exist: they influence many, and among others myself.

"But surely we must limit this influence. Here is a case before us—I am going to treat it as much as I can as if I were not a party interested. I shall speak of myself with simplicity, as I believe myself to be: *you* will not mistake my sincerity for vanity.

"My mother was a woman of singular refinement and most lofty principles. My father is the very clever and original person with whom you are acquainted. From my mother, I would fain hope I have derived so much habitual refinement of manner, as would at least prevent my offending the taste or feelings of any one kind enough to be partial to me. From my father I hope I have learned an honest, straightforward way of looking at things, which I trust will enable me to pursue a manly and honourable career. I possess, moreover, the somewhat singular advantage of inheriting, accidentally, that very property so remarkably interesting to Mr. de Vere: united to him by so many sacred associations and recollections, that a man can hardly help feeling it as an injustice that it should be any but his own.

"Now can it be reasonable? can it be justifiable? that a father should refuse such a reasonable offer as this—merely and solely because a man wants a certain painted paper to hang at the end of his hall, covered with sundry curious triangular figures containing manifold strange, significant, hieroglyphical signs, serving to testify that one Ralph de Vere is descended in right line from some warrior, bad, good, or indifferent, who fought and flourished some thousand years ago. It is too true, we *have* no pedigree. Most people when they become as wealthy as my father, buy one; the thing is easy; but he has ever despised such affectation. My mother was of an ancient family I know: but indeed I should think it an insult to Mr. de Vere's understanding to suppose that if he would reject me as Higgins, he would accept me as Vernon: I will not therefore urge it.

"A man who has had the misfortune to be rejected, is in a most painful situation ... there is something in his heart that cannot sue the hand that has spurned him. To reason the matter in person, seems almost equally impossible, even if I could obtain a hearing; which I probably should not.

"My dear Mr. Lovel, will you accept the generous office of mediator? Will you undertake the always disagreeable, and usually ungrateful task, of interfering in family matters? Will you, with that power of persuasion which I for one have so often felt, will you lay my reasons before Mr. de Vere? will you endeavour to persuade him to sacrifice something of those illusions, however noble or dear, to which he clings only,

I believe, the closer in times such as the present? to sacrifice something for that, which, say what one will, includes after all most of what is worth having in this life? An honest young fellow—thorough true love—and the estate he would rather call his daughter's than any possession in the land. Pray, dear Mr. Lovel, excuse this abundance of words from one whose letters are, as Edmund could testify, usually about three lines long? when once I am *en train*, it seems that I do not know how to stop. It seems as if I could never have done finding reasons for that which I so ardently desire.

"If you think with me, speak for me.

"Most faithfully yours,

"R. VERNON."

"*Mr. Lovel to Reginald.*

"My dear Reginald,

"I most assuredly do think altogether with you, and I will see what can be done.

"Most faithfully yours,

"RICHARD LOVEL."

"*Edmund to Clarice.*

"You shun me, Clarice. Ever since that fatal moment, when, urged by a strange fatality, I violated every resolution that I had formed—you have forsaken me. Not once have you visited your poor Edmund's melancholy chamber. Abandon me not. I own I have sinned; sinned, perhaps, past forgiveness; but it was

the madness of a moment. I have repented of it. It was a moment of passion: forget it, forget it, Clarice. Restore to me your friendship—*that* I cannot forfeit and exist."

"*Clarice to Edmund.*

"I am sure, dear Edmund, I forgive you. Let us look upon it, as I am sure it was, as only a sudden madness. Pray don't think of it. I would come and sit with you again, but I must go out with my mother. Get well, dear Edmund. They tell me you will be down at dinner to-day.

"Your affectionate sister,

"CLARICE."

The two gentlemen were sitting together in Mr. de Vere's study, when Mr. Lovel began,

"Really, De Vere, I must presume upon our long friendship, and you must give me leave to introduce a subject on which I confess it requires a very long friendship to justify my interference. Are my surmises just as to what was the occasion of young Vernon's visit yesterday morning?"

"As I do not know what your surmises exactly are," said Mr. de Vere, somewhat uneasily, "I cannot very readily answer the question. Suffice it that the subject young Vernon came upon, is very disagreeable and painful to me, and I would rather have no allusion made to it."

"Painful," said Mr. Lovel, with one of his meaning smiles, "that is a new doctrine."

Mr. de Vere looked displeased, and was silent.

"A proposal of this description is, at least, usually regarded as somewhat flattering," pursued my father.

"Flattering!—oh, *very!*"

"I think he is one of the most straightforward, high-spirited, excellent young fellows that I have ever met with in my life. Remarkably handsome—excellent manners—gay—pleasing—sensible—the very fellow to catch a girl's eye and seize her heart."

"Very probably."

"And are you quite sure, my good friend, that a little mischief may not have already been done in this way?"

"I cannot pretend to any knowledge upon the subject; the hearts of young ladies are like the heads of young ladies, very much governed by whim and fancy. I have always thought it a part of history into which the less inquiry was made, the better."

"Not always."

A long silence.

"I can*not* believe it possible, De Vere, that you would seriously reject such an offer as this, supposing that your daughter's affections were engaged."

"They had better not be engaged—unless where I approve," said the father, coldly.

"But Mount Sorel."

"Name it not," fiercely for a moment—then more quietly;—and after a little reflection, "but who knows?"....

"I understand, that Mr. Higgins..."

"Mr. Higgins!" with a sneer.

"That Mr. Higgins consents to settle that estate upon Reginald, your daughter, and their children. Take a friend's advice, De Vere, clap your own name to his, and close with the bargain."

"Ah! but how different," musing. "A poor compensation.....But yet," and before his eyes arose that chapel—those tombs—those memories. Again to abandon them to strangers!..... "Did you say? What was it you were saying, Lovel?"

"I was about to say, that with such an estate in his hand, and being himself such a thoroughly excellent fellow, I should have thought so sensible a man as yourself would have hesitated a little before he had given so decided a rejection."

"I see you blame me: men think differently upon these matters. It has been long the mistaken custom of my family to prefer honour to interest."

"May it not have been the custom of your family sometimes to mistake that in which true honour lies?"

"Lovel!"

"Honour," said Mr. Lovel, calmly, "honour consists in the faithful discharge of all our obligations: of obligations which nothing but the moral force of our own hearts can compel us to regard. The obligation which binds a parent to pursue the best happiness of those beings, whom God and society have placed undefended under his control, appears to be the most honourable of obligations. When we sacrifice their best in-

terests to our own prejudices, it is a new sort of honour to me."

"You have learned the jargon of the times, I see," was the answer.

"It is easy to give bad names to good things; and common sense is one of those good things, De Vere, which I, for one, will never be laughed out of: if I can help it, that is. But really," added my father, laughing a little, "I am so confused amid the errors of the perfect and the follies of the wise, that I begin to wonder what part I am to take in the general absurdity. To see you, De Vere, so wedded to a prejudice!"

"Oh yes, all such things are prejudices now. I am perfectly aware of that. But I am not yet, I regret to say, sufficiently *enlightened*, to sacrifice my daughter to the first patriot shoemaker who condescends to ask for her."

"Really, De Vere, you surprise me. What can you be thinking of. Mr. Higgins is a gentleman, and so I believe was his father. Vernon is a name no man in England ought to disdain to be allied to."

"I really am perfectly ignorant of the archives of the house of Higgins. Vernon is a name, of course—"

"Come, come, withdraw your rejection, and let the young fellow come again. You really cannot do better for Clarice. These are ticklish times; it is difficult to say how it will be with any one of us twelve-months hence. Marry her to a fine, high-spirited young man, who, blow high, blow low, will at least take care of her; and restore Mount Sorel to your family. It

really would be ten thousand pities, De Vere, not to reunite the estates. Pooh, pooh! these things must be done. Wise men must be content to put up with that which is not exactly what they would have liked best; especially in this capricious affair of marriage. But seriously, I don't think if you had the choice of the land, you could, under all the circumstances, do better."

"And am I to go cap in hand, and call upon Mr. Higgins, to thank him for his condescension to our wishes?"

"It will be his part to call upon you."

Now is it to be believed? but you must believe it, for so it was: this little circumstance of having to ride over to Mount Sorel, and call first upon Mr. Higgins, weighed more with Mr. de Vere than all the rest. Mr. Lovel saw how it all was after this speech. De Vere was reduced to his last intrenchments; he was wishing to capitulate; but this most distasteful step of calling first upon the man he hated, stood in his way.

"Of course it is for Mr. Higgins, under the circumstances, to call first upon you," decided my father; and so saying, as it appears, decided Mr. de Vere.

He made no further opposition. He did not like it, he could not like it; but he felt more strongly than he would confess, the force of what Mr. Lovel urged; besides, to own the truth, he had already half regretted his hasty determination. As he gazed out of his breakfast-room window upon that line of separation, to him alone discernible, the idea of uniting the whole in one—and that a direct heir of his own, though through the female line, should inherit it—would recur; and he was in secret suf-

fering that internal struggle between his inclination, his pride, and his interests, which torments so many of us.

I think it is Goethe who censures so justly the weakness of our nature, which instead of accepting the facts presented to us, and making the best of them, is always worrying itself with regrets, and wishing they could have been otherwise. Men want the resolution to make a choice: to weigh one evil against the other, and to accept the least. Could Mr. de Vere but have done so in this instance, what a mere feather in the balance would the imaginary evil which he regretted, have appeared. But like many stern and proud men, he was in reality a weak, because an ill-disciplined, man. Between Mount Sorel, a high connexion, and his peculiar dislike to Mr. Higgins, he was sadly *balloté*, as the French say, from one opinion to another.

His daughter's best happiness, the *only* thing he ought to have thought of, was the last thing he did think of. Yet Mr. de Vere would have been surprised to have been called a very selfish man.

He loved his daughter, nevertheless; but he had been habituated to regard the chapter of marriage as one in which nothing but high family interests were to be regarded. There was something to his imagination plebeian in a marriage for love, which would have degraded himself and his daughter equally. You will observe how little my father enlarged upon that part of his brief, in endeavouring to bring Mr. de Vere to reason. Not that my father, I believe, thought very much about it either. The matter of the estates, and his real esteem for Reginald, were what chiefly interested

him. Of the affections of sweet Clarice, he thought as little as men of fifty usually do of the loves of eighteen.

Reginald had some difficulty in concealing from his father the real state of affairs. He was perfectly aware, as I have said, that, his pride once offended, no man on earth would prove intractable, no man on earth more implacable, than Mr. Higgins. He would give the right hand of fellowship to cobblers and coalheavers, especially if they could command a certain jargon of political cant, the fashion of his times, because he cared little for the niceties which distinguish one class of men from another. And, to tell truth, it was not difficult to impose upon him, only attack him through his prejudices: but few men could less bear contradiction, and though not easily offended, no man endured what he felt to be an affront with more impatience.

He thought himself the greatest enemy of flattery; and so he was in the abstract; and yet the doses he was accustomed to receive from the society of raw youths and interested adventurers around him, and which he swallowed, quite in the simplicity of his heart, without being aware of it, exceeds belief.

He was a cheerful, good-natured man when thus treated; and few would have suspected the inflexible nature of his temper when provoked. As no one ever ventured to offend him, no one had as yet experienced what he might prove, when offended.

Besides, what can you do with these determined, one-sided characters, which have but one way of view-

ing any question, and that of course the only way in which any reasonable being would view it? How are you to persuade or soften to relenting the man who never argues with himself. "He has been insulted: let the man who has dared to insult him look to it: he neither forgets nor forgives." Reginald knew well that the insolent rejection of Mr. de Vere (it required a very great portion of that candour which makes us identify ourselves with other people's feelings, before we judge of their actions....a very great portion of such candour even on Reginald's part, not so to qualify it), would never, if known, be forgotten. He knew that had his father the slightest suspicion of what had passed, that he would never be brought to forgive it. He would immediately withdraw the promise to settle Mount Sorel. He would never meet Mr. de Vere, let the consequences be what they might; he would whistle his son down the wind as he would blow away a thistle down. And he would go on, just as cheerfully, just as contentedly as if two young hearts had not been broken.

Reginald intended to go up into his own room and write to my father, and not meet Mr. Higgins until dinner time; when the presence of Perrott would, he trusted, effectually prevent troublesome questions; but as he was coming through the hall the door towards the offices opened, and his father and Mr. Perrott presented themselves.

"Well, Reginald! how have you sped? Is thy fair one all thine own?" cried the father, accosting him gaily as soon as he saw him.

"I—I—hope so," stammered Reginald.

"Hope so, my man! That's a rueful sort of answer for an ardent lover!"

Reginald turned away. You may imagine how disagreeable this attack was under his present feelings, and the more so as that insupportable Perrott stood by, with his cynical sneer, as if prepared to turn every thing tender or delicate in the human heart into ridicule.

"Now, Perrott! stand there! Don't let him run away!" as Reginald endeavoured to escape.

Reginald was in no humour for child's play, so he stopped, and his father and Mr. Perrott approached. He looked at Mr. Perrott, as much as to say that he considered him at least *de trop* upon this occasion, but that gentleman stood his ground: just as ready to meddle and make mischief in his patron's house, Jacobin or Infidel as he was, as any black-browed puritan of the days of Cromwell could have been. For we all know that a busy, meddling, ambitious, interested pretender, be he priest or be he patriot, be he Jesuit or be he Jacobin, will do just as much mischief in society, public or private, under one designation as the other.

"Well, Sir," said Mr. Higgins, now coming up to him, "let us hear all about it. What said the high-descended upon the occasion?.... Out with it."

"Indeed, Sir," said Reginald, impatiently, "three pair of eyes appear to me quite too much in such a colloquy, and enough to put any man out of counte-

nance," turning haughtily round, and giving a full stare at Mr. Perrott's two round black orbs, which were fixed inquiringly upon him. But Mr. Perrot kept his ground.

"What makes you so foolish, Reginald?" said Mr. Higgins, glancing at Perrott. "Perrott can understand the weaknesses of human nature, as well as the best.—We were all in love in our time. I want to hear what the old aristocrat found to say."

"Then, Sir, I will beg leave not to tell you just now;" and brushing by Mr. Perrott with as little ceremony as any *sans culotte* among them all, Reginald with three bounds was up-stairs.

Mr. Perrott looked as much offended at this abruptness as if he had been the Comte d'Artois himself; and assuming a more than usual air of pompous self-sufficiency, he began in his usual prolix manner an harangue upon the unreasonable nature of the prejudices which still infected society, and upon his own exemption from such and from all other errors or weaknesses to which mankind is heir; seasoning his discourse with certain sly and malignant insinuations as regarded Reginald, with all which I will not trouble you.

"Perrott," cried Mr. Higgins looking thoroughly wearied, "keep all this for the London Corresponding Society. Are the letters come in?"

"They are," said Perrott, taking them out of his pocket and presenting them to Mr. Higgins.

"Well, what says the missive?" said Mr. Higgins, as Perrott, with the face of one on whose fiat the fate of

empires was depending, perused the long, rather coarsely written sheet of large paper, which he held in his hand.

"Grand!" said Perrott, elevating his eyes; and he resumed his perusal. Then pausing for a few moments, he collected his countenance into all the awful dignity of the patriot, generously intent upon the liberation of his oppressed and injured country, and began one of those long exaggerated tirades upon the subject of universal fraternisation, cruelty of rulers, venality of courtiers, weakness and ambition of kings, and vices of an all-consuming aristocracy, with which it was the fashion of the day for wise men to enlighten the ignorant among their fellow-creatures. He ended by reading an address from one of the affiliated Jacobin clubs in France to the Corresponding Society in London, written in the most high-flown and ambitious manner, and ending with offering "to the National Assembly of Great Britain, and to the soldiers of liberty of your nation, arms, bayonets, and pikes," with all which I will trouble you no longer, but refer you to the writings of the time if you wish to make further acquaintance with the subject.

After this Mr. Higgins and Mr. Perrott adjourned to the library, and were there engaged for some time in very interesting conversation. How far those wild schemes had then been concocted, which it is certain some of these men, calling themselves patriots, concealed under the convenient mask of constitutional reform, I cannot pretend to say. This is no political work; and politics are here merely alluded to because their work-

ings had such an immediate influence upon private society. Every fireside, every domestic hearth, was but as a stage for the most violent contests; and what else, indeed, could be expected, when men ran into such extremes, and openly expressed the most supreme and unmitigated contempt for every opinion that did not exactly square with their own.

"Unhappily," says the Scotch advocate, Mr. Clerk, on occasion of the Scotch trials, "the times are so violently disturbed by political animosity, that the opposite parties, not contented with disputing about public principle, a contention that may exist without personal differences, seem now to exhibit in many instances a degree of mutual rancour and hatred, which could hardly be exceeded were a civil war in the kingdom. The friendship and cordiality that very lately subsisted among us, has been so much affected by these political squabbles, that friends and relations have separated with mutual disgust. The clamour of party spirit resounds in every quarter; nobody escapes the fury of the times. The common charities of life are lost in the whirlwind of political frenzy which now agitates the minds of men. Happy they who, in the midst of such a ferment, can look on candidly and dispassionately, and form candid and moderate judgments as to the conduct of their fellow-citizens."

This picture, frightful as it is, is far from being overcharged; as my recollection too painfully reminds me; and as the papers and speeches of the times but too evidently testify.

At dinner they all met again.

Reginald had already despatched his letter to my father, and had received his answer; he was in good spirits, and took his place as opposite to his father, with his usual alacrity.

Mr. Higgins was in high good-humour, and Perrott was more conceited and loquacious than ever.

There he sat, luxuriating in the good things of Mr. Higgins' table, and declaiming against the enervating luxury of the times; drinking glass after glass of capital claret, and proposing toast after toast of the most seditious and questionable nature.

"Death to all tyrants!" cried he; "all haughty, sanguinary tyrants! Puppets nursed in blood and slaughter from their infancy—and born to prey upon and scourge mankind! And as the first, him who shall be nameless; and whose head I would separate from his shoulders as readily as I do now this froth!" passing his finger over a creaming tankard which he at that moment held.*

"Really, Sir," at last exclaimed Reginald, addressing his father: he had long been champing the bit, and bursting with indignation and impatience at the ranting tirades of Mr. Perrott: "really if you relish such stuff as this, give me leave to say I do not. If you choose to listen to such seditious nonsense at your own table, you are the master of course, but I must beg to hold myself excused. No doubt there are scoundrels by cart-loads everywhere to be found. Mr. Perrott it appears will

* See the toast as reported in the State Trials.

testify to those who are *in* power—I will promise to match him with those who are *out*."

"Young man," said Mr. Perrott, with dignity, "such language I hold to be beneath my contempt. Stay, stay, my good friend," laying his hand on Mr. Higgins' arm, "let not the dignity of truth and reason be ruffled by the attacks of childish fatuity. I forgive him, citizen: I forgive him...."

"Nay, nay, Reginald," cried Mr. Higgins, as his son rose and was quitting the table, "don't go into a passion. To be sure, Citizen Perrott here does deal in somewhat long-winded harangues: we all know that, citizen. Thou lovest to fill thy mouth with big words, and this periwig-pated passion angers the boy. But, Reginald, if his mouth be full of big words, it is because his heart is full of big things. The energy of true patriotism bursts forth in this torrent of eloquence, which seems to you, perchance, but as empty breath; and, to say truth, so in some measure it does to me. Come, come, Perrott, none of your black looks. He's an honest fellow, though he is somewhat of a saucy, aristocratical Jackanapes. Come, Reginald, your hand. Perrott, your hand."

But the sulky citizen kept his place, and would not extend his hand; and Reginald, saying gaily, "Nay, father, if I am to clasp an honest hand, let it be yours," shook hands with his father, and left the room.

The citizen looked black as midnight.

"And is this the way?" he at last broke forth. "Is this the way, Higgins? when the cry of liberty is electrifying the nations! Is this the way you cast

ridicule upon the cause! Is it thus you allow a son of yours to spurn at philosophy and virtue?"

"Nay, nay, he did no such thing. He thought you a great bore, and he as much as said so. But did I not enlighten him? Did I not proclaim you a very great patriot? Do I not always aver, that a man may be a very great patriot, though he *be* a very great bore? Why, man, if it were not so, we should be terribly ill off for patriots."

"Do you mean an insult, Citizen Higgins?"

"Take it as you please," said the other, carelessly. "If you have not the temper to bear with my son, I can't help it. Reginald is a foolish fellow, I know; you are not the first who has found out *that*; but if I put up with his nonsense, I think others may."

The patriot groaned: but seeing the perfect indifference of his host to all such demonstrations, he began to perceive that the moment was not yet ripe for him to indulge the malignant hatred he was beginning to conceive against Reginald—at least before his patriot father. So digesting his spleen, as best he might, he closed his oracular lips for that time.

Mr. Higgins was indeed secretly amused, and took something of a schoolboy's mischievous pleasure at seeing Reginald chafe at his democratic friend; and still more at seeing the serenity of the philosopher disturbed by the petulance of Reginald. He was playing with edge-tools, and little surmised what an accumulation of black gall was gathering within the recesses of the philosopher's heart.

CHAPTER IX.

It is a golden chain let down from heaven,
That falls like sleep on lovers, and combines
The soft and sweetest minds
In equal knots.

BEN JONSON.

LATE in the evening of the next day, Reginald received through my father an invitation to breakfast at Holnicote on the ensuing morning.

I was now well enough to leave my room, and, restless and miserable, I made use of my new liberty and wandered about the house, seeking but not finding relief from the rankling pain that tortured my heart.

I saw little of any one: for the whole family was in a state of excitement and anxiety, and as for Clarice, she evidently shunned me. When by accident we met, she would speak to me with a sort of mournful gentleness; but with grief I could not but perceive that she carefully avoided being left alone with me, or affording the slightest opportunity for the renewal of our last painful conversation.

Her eyes were clouded with anxiety, but her manner

was composed and quiet: she seemed, in spite of the doubtful aspect of her affairs, to have a source of internal satisfaction which compensated for every thing.

We all met at dinner for the first time. My father had been called away that afternoon upon business which would detain him for a day or two; but before he quitted the field, he had carried as you have seen his point.

Mr. de Vere had yielded, though with no very good grace, to the force of his friend's representations; and he now sat at dinner looking more austere and unapproachable than usual, and never once addressed his daughter during the meal. She would glance her eyes timidly towards him, but nothing on his part answered to the mute appeal.

Our dinner was indeed a silent one. An invalid upon such occasions is sometimes tempted, like the poor prisoner released from the Bastile, almost to regret his restoration to the living world. Even during his abstraction of a few weeks from the general concerns of the family, how may all have changed! He has been excluded from the course of affairs; the torrent has swept on, and left him stranded as it were behind.

My father, who, like some uniting element, by his urbanity and good manners usually held things together, being gone, I was first made fully aware of the sort of uncomfortable restraint in which Mr. de Vere's reserved and yet impatient temper kept his family. Mrs. Fermor and Mrs. de Vere talked at intervals, in a low voice together; Clarice said nothing; and I was occupied in furtively watching her. I saw she looked

pale, and the dark circle round her eyes was darker. She hardly tasted any thing at dinner: pretending to eat, and letting her plate go away with scarcely a morsel tasted.

Such silent meals were not unusual I found at Holnicote, or I should have wondered that her manner and mine seemed altogether to escape observation. Mr. de Vere, indeed, seemed quite as much occupied with his own thoughts as we were.

He had taken his determination; but in these days of a more liberal way of thinking, it will with difficulty be believed how much the decision had cost him, or with what pain and reluctance he accepted what, I believe, few parents in his circumstances in our time would not have grasped at with eagerness.

My father had been summoned hastily away, and had not had an opportunity of informing me of what had passed, or that Mr. de Vere had been persuaded into a reluctant consent. It was not until the next morning that I was made aware of the truth. When I came down into the breakfast-room, I found no one there but Mrs. Fermor, who was employed in arranging the tea-caddies. As soon as I entered she came up to me, and looking rather anxiously at me, said,

"Do you know who is coming to breakfast to-day?"

"Not I, dear Madam."

"I think you cannot be ignorant of what has been in agitation these last two days... Our sweet Clarice...."

I was silent, and she went on—not looking at me

though—for I think every one who mentioned Clarice always avoided looking at me.

"Mr. Vernon is *invited* to breakfast to-day," with a slight emphasis upon the word invited. "Mr. de Vere has invited him," and she went on pouring the tea into the caddies.

I walked to the window, turned my face to the glass, and stood still. I felt relieved to find myself quite insensible, quite stupid; the movement of my heart was not accelerated by a second. I recollect my feeling was, that I was cured. I blessed the implacable power that had suddenly relieved me from my torturing pangs: I felt as the fabled Prometheus when the vulture was slain which preyed upon his vitals. There are suspensions of all agony; there are pauses of insensibility amid the severest tortures.

I stood watching the gardener, who on this late October morning was sweeping away the leaves from the grassy terrace; and I listened to the cheerful twittering of those birds which at this season seem, like some flowers, to feel a renovation of spring. It was one of those bright, sunny, dewy, autumn mornings, so inexpressibly tender and soft in their expression. The calm melancholy of the slowly expiring year, it might be, was what composed my senses.

Mrs. Fermor and her tea gently rustling at the table, was the only sound in the apartment; and this contributed to lull me. I stood there without thought or feeling. It seemed to me, as if both mind and heart were vacant.

It was later than usual before any one appeared. At length I heard a hand upon the lock of the door: I turned, but it was only Mr. de Vere. We saluted each other as usual, and then he sat down in his place at the end of the table, took up his newspaper and began to read. In the meantime I had drawn into the recess of the window again.

Another long pause, when the door again opened, and Clarice and her mother entered the room. I stood back in the recess of the window gazing upon them, for I could not turn my fascinated eyes away; but the window-curtain fell so that they did not see me; indeed, no one looked that way. She had on a white morning-dress—most simple, yet most elegant. I don't know how these things are fashioned, one only knows the effect: this appeared to me most beautiful. The drapery was in those days admirably calculated to display the figure, and hers was of unrivalled beauty. Her face—oh, never to my last hour shall I forget that! The light of love was there. What a beauteous tinge of rose upon that usually pale cheek! What veiled brightness in those eyes! How could I bear it? That light of love—that ineffable ray divine—kindled, and not for me! That more than earthly beauty—alas! for another. But I was stupid; I was insensible; I gazed as if it had been another.

Mrs. de Vere looked so happy; she who seldom expressed any emotion in her placid, gentle, rather inanimate countenance, now looked the picture of a mother's satisfaction; of that tender satisfaction which swells a

mother's heart upon such an occasion. Ah! how different from the pride and exultation, too often mistaken for it!

Mr. de Vere looked up as his daughter entered the room, gave one glance at her and then resumed his reading; but she—her grateful, loving heart, full to overflowing—stole down towards him and sat down by his side. Not all his coldness, all his austerity, could alienate this affectionate nature.

She sat down by her father, and then glancing hastily round, said,

"Where is Edmund? Not worse, I hope, again. Where is he?"

"He has been down," said Mrs. Fermor, looking round. "He was here a moment ago; perhaps he has strolled through the window upon the terrace."

I took the hint whether intended or not, slipped through the open glass-door, took two turns upon the terrace, and then coming into the room, shook hands with every one. The hand of Clarice was very cold as she put it into mine.

"Half-past nine," said Mrs. de Vere, looking at her watch. "Shall we wait?"

"By no means," lifting his head from the newspaper with an air of indifference. "Edmund, may I trouble you to ring the bell for breakfast."

But as I rose the door-bell rang. We heard the great hall-door open—quick, impatient steps—the servant flung open the door, and Reginald was in the room.

He looked flushed, hurried, animated, happy, em-

barrassed, fluttered; but Mr. de Vere's habitual politeness relieved him. He rose from his chair, met him with extended hand, shook his cordially, said something about being most happy to see him, which expressed every thing that it was desirable to express, and placing him between Mrs. de Vere and Mrs. Fermor, ordered breakfast, calling to me to take the place on the other side of him, opposite to Clarice. Clarice, whose cheeks were now died with crimson, now pale as the fairest lily; and whose little, trembling hands could scarcely pour out the coffee for her father.

It was done; Reginald was arrived; Reginald was introduced, as it was understood upon all sides, to be a member of his family; and, strange to say, but not more strange than comfortable, from that moment all Mr. de Vere's reluctant scruples seemed to give way. Overcome as by a charm, and yielding once more to the sweet fascination of Reginald's countenance and manners, he seemed as cordially and entirely happy as the rest.

This is often the case. Men rear up factitious barriers of pride or consistency, as they think, and feel themselves bound in honour to maintain them; but once overcome, Nature resumes her rights, and we are but too glad to be happy against our will.

The pleasant tone in which Mr. de Vere spoke to his daughter, was sufficient to betray his internal satisfaction; the cordial pleasure with which his eye evidently dwelt upon Reginald, more unequivocally perhaps displayed it. He, quick and penetrating, was

soon aware of the conquest he had achieved; and relieved from sundry embarrassing and perplexing feelings, he was again the Reginald of former times.

Conversation became animated. Mrs. de Vere, even Mrs. de Vere, was agreeable and conversible; Mrs. Fermor spoke more than her wont; Mr. de Vere again expanded under the benign influence, and was once more the varied and powerful converser of other days.

Clarice and I, alone, were silent; but no one observed our silence. She, in the fulness of her content: I, in the climax of my despair: we were both alike composed, quiet, and speechless.

The lovers, I believe, never exchanged one look, certainly not one word, during that long breakfast; but the magnetism of love suffices. To be in one another's presence, was bliss sufficient for the hour; a bliss so great, that any increase of it would perhaps at this moment have amounted almost to pain.

The tone of her father's voice, the assurance that her lover was, after all, dear to him, just filled to the brim the exquisite cup of felicity that Clarice was then imbibing.

She never looked at her lover, but she did at her father; and, oh! with what tenderness those eyes were beaming!

It is not unfrequently the case, that these reserved and somewhat austere tempers are loved passionately by others who seem bound to them by a strange sympathy. Trusting, loving, open, affectionate hearts, like that of my Clarice, seem to feel a certain consonance

with the deeper tones of character, which terrify and alienate others. Those hidden depths of feeling, for them, possess a strange fascination; they fancy, or they perceive, those hidden pangs of sensibility, concealed from all the rest of the world, and are attracted towards them by a most intense interest. Had Mr. de Vere not been her father, Clarice would have felt herself strangely interested by a character such as his; as it was, she in secret idolised him. He was sometimes kind, even to tenderness; though too often chilling, distant, and cold; but now, when there was a cordiality and fondness in his tone and manner which she had never felt before, it filled her happy heart with a new, and, if possible, yet more exquisite happiness.

Now she, too, recovering from her first confusion, lifted up her pretty head, and began to talk to her father, and he to her; and even Mrs. de Vere spoke to her husband with less restraint, and he to her. They were all floating in an element of happiness—forgive me the expression, I find it difficult to describe the charm that seemed pervading.

They had reason to be happy; every rational wish that man can form on earth was fulfilled for them; and added to it, the immense satisfaction to Mr. de Vere, of reuniting Mount Sorel to his family. His pride, as I have remarked, having once given way, he seemed to think no more of it; but wearied with the various efforts he had so long mastered to support it, yielded to the repose and comfort of the hour.

Just as, in a far different sense, poor Edmund did. He felt the same relief from internal contest, in a

stupid, passionless despair; as he sat silent and unregarded amid the general cheerfulness.

Every one was too much occupied with their own content, to think of him.

> "Why let the stricken deer go weep,
> The hart ungalled play;
> For some must watch, while some must sleep,
> Thus runs the world away."

"My father desired me to present his compliments to you, and to say that he shall do himself the honour of calling upon you to-morrow morning," said Reginald.

"I shall be very happy to see Mr. Higgins," was Mr. de Vere's reply. "I ought to have done myself the pleasure of calling at Mount Sorel long ago; perhaps, strictly speaking, I ought to do so now. Your father is very good to overlook the remissness of a recluse, such as I am, and to pay me a visit, which I shall have much pleasure in returning. I hope, Mr. Vernon, you will spend the day with us; I think you have never walked over Holnicote; we have a few pheasants, and my keeper is at your disposal, or perhaps you will like a lounge about the grounds with us. Come, Mrs. Fermor, are you for a walk? Clarice, my dear, fetch your hat. Edmund, what are you for?"

I gave a sickly sort of smile, and said, "I did not think that I should venture farther than the hermitage."

Something in the tone of my voice seemed to strike Reginald; his countenance changed, and he looked anxiously at me.

"Don't you think you are equal to a walk, Edmund," said he, kindly. "Come, try, it will do you good."

"You think so?" said I, with a slight shake of the head.

He said no more; but turning away said something to Mrs. de Vere. There was a slight, the slightest possible trembling in his voice, as he spoke to her.

The pride of man revolts at pity; most of all the pity of a successful rival; but was it in the power of a heart, proud and stubborn even as was Edmund's, to resist this affectionate and unaffected sympathy? But, alas! there is no balm in Gilead for wounds such as mine.

They walked in the park; Mr. de Vere, Mrs. Fermor, and those two; and then they came in and the rest sat down; I do not know how it came to pass, but those two were walking together alone upon the upper terrace.

The day was light and soft; the dark woods tinted with the mellow hues of autumn, the last lingering flowers fading in the parterres, the last roses mingling with the crimson leaves of the creepers which festooned and twisted round the windows, the white waxy blossom hanging on the arbutus, the robin whistling, the insects sleepily humming, the doors of the sitting-room open to the garden.

Mr. de Vere was resting upon a sofa, Mrs. Fermor sitting quiet in her chair, Mrs. de Vere at her work, I thrown into a deep fauteuil pretending to read, and those lovers from time to time flitted past the window, like an angel vision in this hour of tranquil stillness; she listening, as he, with head bending towards her, talked, as lovers talk.

"Oh day for ever and for ever blest! Day of unmingled peace and happiness! Oh heavenly day! Blue depths of azure sky! your deep serene seems to reflect the depths of this grateful, grateful heart. Oh my father! would that I dare, kneeling humbly at thy feet, kiss that hand in reverence, and pour out the feelings of this thankful heart. Alas! I dare not, but here I kneel in spirit: here I invoke blessings upon that head, and here I devote my time and soul to thee! No, in this new world, this paradise, on the verge of which I stand, will I ever, ever forget thee, father? who, in condescending love to your poor child, have granted the wishes of this too frail and tender heart. Thou who knowest not frailty—thou hast felt for me; and what shall I do for thee, my father? Sweet Reginald! dear Reginald!—it is not as if we had ever been strangers. He feels as I feel; he sees as I see; he loves where I love; he is the most generous, disinterested, kind of human beings. How he feels for my father!—for my mother!—for all of us! How he understands all the wants of this family! He will be a son indeed,—a true son to my father, and to my poor mother; and for me! cradled in his love, it seems to me that sorrow could never reach me more. I am too happy! alas! why cannot all the living world be as blest as I am!"

CHAPTER X.

Ainsi certains gens, faisant les empressés,
S'introduisent dans les affaires;
Ils font par tout les nécessaires,
Et par tout importuns devraient être chassés.
LA FONTAINE.

THUS did the gentle Clarice express her innocent joy; in the meantime those rougher beings who had now become connected so closely with her destiny, thus discoursed.

"What are you going to employ your restless brain upon this morning, Perrott?" said Mr. Higgins. "I must ride over to Holnicote. Reginald insists upon it that I go and make my *congées* to Mr. de Vere."

"Oh," said Perrott, "if there is no objection I will ride with you. The eye of philosophy loves to contemplate man in all his different aspects, and something may be reaped by the enlightened inquirer, from the contemplation of this pretender to obsolete prerogatives."

"Well," said Higgins, "if you are so minded, come along; but can you ride? You citizens of cities have been known to bestride the generous steed in a some-

what strange fashion; and I suspect the saddle and you are not very particularly well acquainted."

"I would rather, certainly, Citizen Higgins, be driven in that new convenience of yours, called a whiskey," said the citizen, looking somewhat ruefully at his rusty black shorts, gray stockings, and not very well polished shoes.

It was the fashion of all the children of liberty in those days to affect the dress as well as the manners of the sovereign people. A man would hardly have been esteemed a patriot who was not a sloven.

"Well, I'll drive you, then: together will we visit the great man."

"Great man! I hold myself above such contemptible distinctions."

"Unquestionably you do: but as for me, now that Reginald, my foolish son, is going to ally himself therewith, a sort of a ridiculous kind of respect is beginning to creep over me for these old families."

"Could I have believed you capable of such idle weakness," said Perrott, "I should have regarded with more aversion than I have hitherto done this unnatural alliance, between the young blood of patriots, and the corrupted stream which has flowed for centuries through the breasts of oppressive tyrants and those heartless beasts of prey who have long preyed upon the vitals of the human race. But I have done. I see it with sorrow; I lament the degenerate weakness; but I have done."

For Mr. Higgins began to look somewhat impatient.

"In good time; for here comes my faithful shepherd —here comes Reginald! Heigh, boy of my heart! we are preparing our most dutiful selves to obey your sovereign mandates, and are going to call upon this future father-in-law of yours, this morning."

"*Wel!*" repeated Reginald, in some dismay.

"Ay, *wel!* I asked Perrott to come, and he's going."

"Mr. Perrott is very good," said Reginald, and speaking with some hesitation; "but are you quite sure, father? I have little experience of the world.... Upon such an occasion, is it quite the thing? Is it quite correct to Mr. de Vere? May he not....?"

"I thought how soon we should all be slaves to this De Vere," muttered Perrott. "Oh, by no means, Mr. Higgins! Pray, don't think of it. Your cue henceforth, doubtless, is first to study what will be well pleasing in the sight of this Mr. de *Vere*."

"Nonsense! what is De Vere to me? I shall do what I think proper, Reginald. I am not going to forsake a friend to please him, or any stupid aristocrat whatsoever."

"There is no talk of forsaking a friend, Sir," said Reginald, quietly. "Merely a matter of etiquette: a first visit upon such an occasion—a total stranger—a...."

"A plain honest citizen and patriot," interrupted Perrott; "no perfumed, silken sycophant..... Oh, Higgins! *I* am not fit person for such fine company."

"You only do yourself justice, Sir," said Reginald; "you are much too good for such questionable society

as that you will meet at Holnicote, and I wonder my father...."

"Heyday, my young gentleman, what's this?" cried Mr. Higgins. "That's the order of the day, is it? My friend's not to be introduced there. Come, come, Sir, let us understand at once about this fine new connexion. If your father, and any friend of your father's he thinks fit, are not good enough to go to Holnicote, why, let Holnicote and all its inhabitants go hang—I'll none of them. Go, and make your visits yourself, Mr. Suitor. Come, honest Perrott, you and I will ride over to S., and see what our friends in the Corresponding Society are about there."

"Young man," said Perrott, arrogantly, "I despise as much as I pity the feeble imbecility which bends to the idle tyranny of a social system, about to be exploded. Your father, a man of a far different mould, scorns to sacrifice the feelings of an honest friend of himself and of his country, to the arrogant pretensions of a stranger. Enough! I am satisfied."

"What has all this to do with your fine rounded periods, Mr. Perrott?" said Reginald, losing all patience. "I asked my father, and he had kindly consented to pay a first visit to the father of the young lady, who has condescended to bestow her hand upon me. I am sure I don't know, and I am sure I don't care, but it strikes me that any man of delicacy would avoid thrusting himself in upon such an occasion."

Reginald was more vehement than prudent; he could not forbear when speaking to this odious man, from

throwing in tones and expressions of contempt that embittered the argument.

"Enough—enough, young man! Mr. Higgins, perhaps I want delicacy in any longer thrusting myself upon the society at Mount Sorel....I bid you farewell, citizen; I wipe a tear at the defalcation of one born for higher destinies. I shake the dust off my feet, and leave you to the noble employment of pandering to the fancies and pretensions of Mr. de Vere."

"Stuff and nonsense! Perrott, I am not going to bate an iota in compliment to the folly and nicety of any man upon earth. Here, Reginald! take your choice—I will do just as you please. Either I will go and pay my devoirs to this young woman and her father or not; but mind, if I go Perrott goes with me."

There was no alternative. It was plain Perrott was resolved to go; it was plain he had the key to Mr. Higgins' character, and was beginning to mould and wind him to his will.

That Mr. Higgins should omit to make the promised visit, was not to be thought of.

Reginald, rather seriously, told his father that he should feel much obliged by his making the visit upon any terms, rather than not make it at all; and glancing a look of haughty contempt at Perrott, he left the room, and to make sure of the visit ordered the whiskey.

It soon came round, and the two gentlemen, neither of whom condescended to make the slightest fresh arrangement of a dress to the last degree in disorder, mounted the vehicle, and sallied forth together.

As they went, citizen Perrott employed his time in certain artful insinuations intended to poison the mind of the father against the son. For the present, however, Mr. Higgins seemed proof against them; he took no notice of, nor made the slightest answer to, what Perrott said; but humming *sotto voce* to himself, seemed intent upon driving a somewhat unmanageable steed, so as to secure the necks of himself and his companion in their particularly dangerous vehicle.

At last Perrott, uncertain whether what he was uttering, in tones somewhat lower than usual, was even heard, began to weary even of malice; and sinking into a sulky, or, as he thought, a dignified silence, the two citizens pursued their way together.

The gates of Holnicote open, and admit the pair, and they soon stop at the hall door. Citizen Perrott with some little difficulty descends from the high carriage, and rings the bell.

"Is Mr. de Vere at home?" halloas Mr. Higgins, from his whiskey.

"I believe so, Sir," bows the butler.

"Mr. Higgins and Mr. Perrott. Send some one if you please, to hold my horse."

At the name the folds of the door fly open, and the gentlemen enter the low dark hall of Holnicote.

Low and dark was the hall; but there was a certain dignity in the whole aspect of things, which struck our two Jacobins equally, though in a very different manner.

Mr. Higgins was pleased with the impression he received; and rough and negligent as were his own

habits, he began to feel a secret pride in the elegant appointments of his new connexion.

But Mr. Perrott felt altogether uncomfortable; there was something in what he saw around him to which he was little accustomed, and the contrast with his own appearance and habits secretly mortified him. Abash him it could not, nothing could abash that forehead of brass; but he felt something that in a slight degree resembled a feeling of humiliation, and he prepared himself to hate with more than his usual acrimony, the insolent aristocrat who presumed to be so much more refined and polished than his far more intrinsically valuable self. And he followed in considerable ill humour the quiet and respectful gentleman in livery, through the hall and along the passage which led to the morning room.

"Mr. Higgins and Mr. Perrott;" the door opened, and they entered.

The ladies were at work, Clarice as usual embroidering her mother's screen; Mr. de Vere thrown back in a fauteuil reading the newspaper; and I lounging on a distant sofa, imagining that I was studying Helvetius.

The whole apartment presented the very picture of ease and elegance united, a habit of life unnoted by those accustomed to it; but which produces so much effect upon the imagination of those habituated to ways rougher and less refined.

Fancy the handsome apartment, the furniture in the best style of Louis Quinze; the delicate and soft figure of Mrs. de Vere in her gray pearled silk dress, and fine Mechlin laces, sitting upon her settee; near her Mrs.

Fermor in her black dress, contrasting with the fair girl who sat at some little distance bending over the rich colours of her embroidery, dressed in white with sundry pretty knots of blue ribands, and her long hair, as it was then the fashion to wear it, hanging in soft waves and ringlets round her; at her feet upon a crimson cushion, her little dog Frisk fast asleep. Could any picture of still life be prettier? the light upon it mellowed, as it fell through the green embowered and high narrow windows.

The quick eye of Mr. Higgins took in all its beauty at a glance, as the opening door disclosed it.

"Mr. Higgins and Mr. Perrott," and the gentlemen entered the room.

First came Mr. Higgins; a fine tall, slender figure, with his curling, raven hair, his hawk eye and hawk nose, his lips a little drawn up, and his well advanced, well charactered chin; his dress simple, not to say neglected, yet far from slovenly; he looked the model of a high-spirited tribune of the people. Behind him shuffled Perrott; short, slovenly, sinister looking. The one in high good humour, the other very much the reverse.

Mr. de Vere rose from his chair, and advancing with that fine manner which distinguished him, held out his hand to Mr. Higgins, and a cordial salute passed between the gentlemen of opposite sides of the water. Then Mr. de Vere presented Mr. Higgins to Mrs. de Vere, and then to "my daughter," who, blushing deeply, made a somewhat shy, but very graceful and dignified courtesy to her future father-in-law. Mrs. Fermor was next introduced as "our very valued

friend." And then Mr. Higgins begged leave to present to Mr. de Vere a very worthy friend of his, Mr. Perrott, who made a half sullen, half awkward bow. And then I rose and shook Mr. Higgins by the hand, who, in a tone somewhat less subdued than those usually to be heard in that parlour, expressed his pleasure at seeing me about again; and with, "Edmund, I must introduce you to this estimable citizen friend of mine," made Mr. Perrott and me acquainted. Then we all sat down, and seemed, all things considered, pretty well at ease.

The great politeness of Mr. de Vere's manner, it was true, did set every one at ease to a certain degree; but it at the same time acted as a restraint. Mr. Higgins seemed to feel the ease, and in some slight degree the restraint; but he was evidently much pleased with Mr. de Vere, and troubled himself little whether Mr. de Vere was pleased with him. Still, as was seen in the course of the conversation that ensued, he did not talk with his usual dictatorial carelessness, but seemed rather to avoid touching upon any subject which might not be altogether pleasant to his host. He looked, as he in truth was, charmed with the appearance of the sweet young *fiancée*; and, sitting down in the chair offered to him with an air of much satisfaction, he began to address himself to the ladies, and to converse very agreeably.

He had indeed, too much sense, too much native good taste, not to be extremely well pleased with all that he saw; and the interest and satisfaction which he felt, animated him in a way to make him more than usually pleasant.

Mr. Perrott had seated himself a little apart from the ladies, and nearer to Mr. de Vere; who, too polite to suffer any one in his house to feel neglected, addressed himself with great urbanity to the somewhat cloudy-countenanced citizen, and endeavoured to lead him into conversation.

But there was a certain dignity, a certain air of unaffected superiority when he addressed our philosopher, which all his good breeding could not entirely conceal. I am sure he did not intend it, but he could not help looking like one politely bestowing attention upon an inferior in need of it; and the advocate of universal equality and the rights of man was quick enough to perceive this, and was with it in proportion offended. In vain he tried to assume a certain coarse and impudent tone of superiority, which he, in his turn, was accustomed to exercise over his fellows; he felt as if a kind of magical barrier was opposed to familiarity or presumption by the dignified politeness of Mr. de Vere. As he had not been much in what is generally called good company, he had been accustomed to carry all before him in the circles he frequented, by the coarseness, bluntness, and sarcastic bitterness of his conversation. He never felt so ill at ease in his life: he fidgetted in his chair, crossed and uncrossed his legs, endeavoured at an harangue, but found it impossible to insert the wedge of his discourse into the conversation: while the ease, spirit, and gaiety of Mr. Higgins at last forced upon him the unwilling conviction that an oration, however eloquent, upon the rights of man and wrongs of governments, would be here quite out of place.

Besides, Mr. Higgins, who was secretly, in a very small degree, annoyed, that he had presented his republican friend in society so little assimilated to him, kept the worthy man in order by his quick, sarcastic, hawk eye; which told that its master was quite ready to show the other up if he did not take especial care to avoid, either in the subject-matter of his discourse, or his manner of treating it, any thing that could in the least degree tend to throw ridicule upon his companion.

Meanwhile, Mr. de Vere, Mr. Higgins, and the ladies kept up a general conversation, strictly confined to topics of that harmless nature, which even in those times —when it was almost impossible to utter an opinion without coming in collision with that of your neighbour—could by possibility scandalise no one. They talked of the beauty of the day, the charms of the fading year, the loveliness of the walks and rides in the neighbourhood; upon which last subject Mr. Higgins showed so much taste and knowledge, that it was obvious he had perambulated the whole country, both on horseback and on foot, till not a nook or corner of it had been unvisited; and he described what he had seen with that plain, unstudied eloquence of description, which used to give so much charm to Cobbett's "Rural Rides."

You fell in love with two old oak trees, a swinging sign-post, and a horse-trough, when his pencil painted it. There is an inexhaustible charm and interest about the conversation of men gifted with this species of eloquence. Mr. de Vere, it was plain, was once more subjugated by a fascination the most unexpected; and it is impossible to tell you how much the leveller, Mr. Hig-

gins, was secretly flattered by perceiving the power he was exercising over the imagination of the haughty aristocrat: the man he had hitherto contemplated with a mixture of defensive pride and aversion—looking upon him as one who would never consider or treat him upon those terms of equality, which he regarded as his due.

He had expected haughtiness, he met urbanity; he had looked for supercilious indifference to him and to his opinions, and he found the most agreeable reciprocation of ideas; he was far more gratified than he would have cared to confess. His eye, too, was perpetually glancing at the lovely, blushing creature, who, her head bent over her frame, scarcely joined in the conversation; and the undisguised admiration which that eye expressed, could not but gratify both the parents in return. There is a little foolish weakness in every parent's heart, let him be as cold, stern, and impassible as he may.

As for Clarice, she thought Mr. Higgins quite delightful. With her innate love of nature in all its forms—his animated descriptions; the sympathies he betrayed with every living creature of the wilds, be it hawk, squirrel, blackbird, otter, or owl; his love of chrystal pebbly brooks, of springing trout and honeysuckle hedges, of green over-arched lanes, mountain lakes and heathy commons; all found a response in her imagination.

The passionate love of nature, which formed so strong a feature in her character, had never before met with one who so completely sympathised with it. We were

all of us at Holnicote, either too cold for such enthusiasm, or too much occupied with other and deeper passions for the childish innocence of "belts of straw and ivy buds."

The head was now raised from the work: first she listened and then she answered, till, charmed by the theme, she forgot her shyness, and talked like her delightful self.

Presently the discourse fell upon the different fashions of gardens. Mr. Higgins, to the surprise of every body—as Mr. Perrott, here contriving to put in a word, began to declaim in praise of unsophisticated nature, and to anathematise all the trammels and disguises of art—announced himself as the worshipper of old-fashioned gardening; of trim yew hedges; and of all the stately formality of the ancient mode. So, all at once, a little species of contest (for contest in those times was the usual termination of all conversation, however begun) arose between the two allied powers.

And while Mr. Perrott quoted from Rousseau, and stole whole sentences from Werter to express the impassioned refinement of his own feelings, Mr. Higgins laughed at him and his fantastical notions, and turned him into ridicule unsparingly.

I, who was in secret a good'deal of Citizen Perrott's taste in these matters, and who preferred Julie's wilderness at Clarens to all the formal yew hedges that ever were clipped, thought that Mr. Higgins was rather hard and ill-natured to the little *homme de la nature*, and I began to look upon him with less dislike than I had done at first.

Soon afterwards we adjourned by one consent to the terrace, to settle the question by an appeal to the gardens at Holnicote. I, ill-disposed to join the conversation, suffered the party, who were walking and talking so sociably, to pass on before me, and I lingered behind with Mr. Perrott.

This was the first time we had met; not that we were unknown to each other, that is, his name was not new to me; I had heard of him as one of the most active agents of the Corresponding Societies, which were at this moment, in emulation of the affiliated clubs on the other side the channel, endeavouring to fraternise mankind on this: with what ultimate views, heaven and themselves know: if themselves really *did* know, which some have been inclined to doubt. Certainly the behaviour of these societies during the latter end of the year '93, and the beginning of '94, when the barbarous and insane tyranny of the French Convention ought to have opened the eyes of all to the danger of rash experiments in politics satisfied every one that their proceedings were, to say the least, very questionable.

As for Perrott, I have not the slightest doubt, he was ready to play the part that Couthon, Hebert, Robespierre, Marat, or any other of those wretched demagogues exhibited, in the ensuing mad and desperate days. He was a cool, determined man, intent upon his object; namely, to make his cause, and through his cause, himself pre-eminent. He was one of those bad men whose conduct obscured, hastened, and finally overthrew what was once a most noble and righteous cause.

I see all this clearly enough now, I did not in the least see it then; I disliked Perrott at first, but it was not long before he obtained a most unaccountable influence over my mind.

Yet why do I say unaccountable? I was prepared by a bitter disappointment to take an interest in that cause to which "every one who was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented" adhered. I was anxious to distract my mind by any object, and I flung myself with more unreserve than ever into the sea of politics.

Mr. Perrott had got hold of me: he had got a hearing: and it was inconceivable with what plausible sophistry he managed to interest my best feelings and delude my understanding. I was a young man of good fortune; in other words, of *much promise*; and to fraternise with such was a great object with the patriots of the day. To do the worthy citizen justice, he was not sparing of his pains in the good cause.

"You cannot forbear," my good friend, argued he; "you cannot shut your eyes to the vile corruption that paralyses, degrades our social system. Ruin stares us in the face in every part of the kingdom! Every manufacturing town is labouring under the deepest misery. London shows no less than eight thousand Spitalfields' manufacturers that are starving. Norwich, another great trading town (from which I have had the honour of appearing in the Convention as delegate), is in so dismal a situation, that the poor-rates, which were at first, two years ago, but 3s. 6d. in the pound, now amount to the enormous sum of 17s. 6d. As for the in-

terest of agriculture".... he did not, you will observe, spare my patience, but long-winded harangues were the order of the day: the word 'bore' had but just been invented, to act like a charm in repressing that love of hearing themselves talk, that button-holding system which was one of the domestic oppressions of the era. "The interests of agriculture are certainly not at all understood and regarded in parliament.* Has not an act been recently passed by which the American farmer, with very trifling rents and taxes, and tithe free, is allowed competition with the British farmer in his own market? crippled though he be by insupportable burdens. Such, my young friend, are the results of a government where the general interests of the nation are sacrificed by a class: and shall the public not be alarmed? Good heavens! what is become of our constitution, if under such a state of things," &c. &c., for any one who will take the trouble to read the history of those days of dissension, may round Mr. Perrott's periods for themselves.

I retain this part of it: because on reflecting over the past, as I often do in my solitary arm-chair, it has struck me as a curious contrast to that which we are accustomed to hear from the orators of this our day.

Our conversation was interrupted by Mr. Higgins, who had taken out his watch, and, calling to Perrott, said,

"Perrott, it grows late, and you must make a perora-

* Literal from Arthur Young's reply to Mr. Capel Lofft's inquiries, as quoted by Skirving in his own defence on the Scotch trials for Sedition.—*See State Trials*, vol. 23, p. 575.

tion. But Master Edmund had better come and study the second section of your discourse at Mount Sorel. When will you come, Edmund?"

I promised, if able, to ride over the next day.

"And I will have the pleasure of riding over with you, Edmund," said Mr. de Vere. "You shall show me the way to Mount Sorel."

"And when you have once found it, Sir," said Mr. Higgins, "I hope I shall be able to interest you in its improvement, and have the pleasure of discussing *many* matters concerning it, upon the spot."

Mr. de Vere bowed.

As Perrott took his leave, he took a small pamphlet out of his pocket, and offering it to me, desired me to read it, and give him my opinion of it when we met in the morning.

How could I have been so blind, as not to be at once disgusted and alienated by such atrocious and barbarous nonsense, as was contained in this and other writings of a similar stamp and similar date, cooked up for circulation among the lowest and most ignorant of the people.

But I was blind! and though somewhat scandalised at the very seditious tone of the publication alluded to, concluded such or any means were excusable to promote the glorious end in view.

CHAPTER XI.

You good gods,
Let what is here contain'd relish of love,
Of my lord's health, of his content.—
—— Good wax, thy leave:—Blest be
You bees that make these locks of counsel!
You clasp young Cupid's tables.

SHAKSPEARE.

MR. HIGGINS and his friend rode home together. They proceeded in silence some little time; and it was not till the gates of Holnicote had closed behind them, that Perrott began with,

"I see you under a new aspect, Citizen Higgins, this morning. I am I find, to admire the versatility, as much as I have been accustomed to admire the *force*, of your genius."

"Sir," said Mr. Higgins, "your good opinion does me honour, and I am proud to deserve such approbation. But as how, most acute observer, how and when have I exhibited that versatility of talent with which you are pleased to compliment, me unworthy?"

"I have seen you," said Perrott, with enthusiasm, "dignifying and adorning the generous part of the patriot; it was new to me to see you in the *rôle* of the subtle insinuating courtier."

"Courtier!" said Higgins, bluntly, and as if not quite pleased with the compliment. "Courtier! and to whom? I am no frequenter of courts, man!"

"The baseness and servility of courts is not confined to the apartments of kings," remarked the philosopher.

"Baseness and servility!" said his friend. "What do you mean?"

"It is all well—all very well. I see the game I believe. It is not the first time, nor will it be the last, that the inflexible virtue of the patriot has yielded to the tender facility of the parent. Lucius Junius Brutus, where art thou?"

"Perrott," said Mr. Higgins, impatiently, "what are you driving at? Speak out, man. Canst not speak out? No beating about the bush with me. Didst think I was too civil to the old aristocrat? Why man, I like him; and as for the girl! she's the sweetest, prettiest little thing I ever saw in my life. Reginald is a sharp chap, depend upon it."

"Oh! mighty well, mighty well,—I have not a word more to say upon the subject: yet suffer from me one word of advice. Adhere to the system I see you have adopted; and carefully keep your opinions to yourself. Don't try him too far; I see he won't bear contradiction. Mum's the word, if you are to keep in favour with the great man."

"In favour! in favour, indeed! What's his favour to me. I like the man, and I like the girl, and that's enough. His favour! he may like me or not just as pleases him—what's his favour to me?"

"He is a man," pursued Mr. Perrott, as if speaking to

himself, "to be measured with half an eye. The arrogance of his pretensions, the contemptible illiberality of his views, and the insolent manner of exacting observance from all who approach him, disclose to the discerning observer those habits of domestic oppression, and that overweening tyranny over opinion, the attribute of the favourites of prescription."

"Upon my word, Perrott, you're haranguing in a strange fashion now. Man of peace, what do you mean by all this stuff?"

"I *am* a man of peace," began Perrott, in a tone of sentiment, "and it is because I *am* a man of peace, that I advise you, my friend, to have a care how you give vent to the overflowing generosity and freedom of your sentiments before this man of parchments. I tell you, Mr. Higgins, he wont bear it."

"Wont bear it!" cried Mr. Higgins, haughtily. "I would like to see the man who wont bear to hear whatever I may think proper to say."

"I tell you he wont."

"I tell you he shall."

"We shall see: we shall see"..... said Perrott, with a certain indulgent waving of the subject which irritated Mr. Higgins beyond measure, and closing his oracular lips he uttered for that time no more.

But by the time they arrived at Mount Sorel, Mr. Higgins was already far less pleased with Mr. de Vere than he had been at quitting Holmicote: and it was with a certain coldness he told the impatient Reginald, that he had found De Vere more tolerable than he had expected, and that he liked the girl well enough.

You have already ceased to take interest in me. What character so weak, so ungenerous as mine then was, can interest you, or any one?

Can any one care to investigate the sensations of a heart, not bravely combating with evil, but yielding with a sort of sulky discontent to inevitable necessity? The felicity of the two young lovers was a prospect insupportable to me; I could not bear it, and I seemed to scorn any endeavour at reconciling myself with it.

I have told you that I was without fixed principles; abandoned to my own passions and feelings, and without the slightest conviction of the absolute necessity of internal self-control.

I was crossed in my dearest wishes, and what was life to me? I was in a humour to have committed suicide, if I had not met with Perrott.

Dissatisfied as I was with myself and with all the world, my mind took a morbid and distempered view of every thing; the evils that unquestionably existed, I regarded with a violence of irritation which arose from the restless torment of my own mind. I had ceased to balance one consideration against another, or to meditate and reflect, as the importance of the subject demanded. I was no longer prompted by that honest love of justice and right, which, with all my many errors, has in general impelled me. Dissatisfaction, with a state of things in which I found myself so unhappy, was my ruling motive; and Perrott was not slow to take advantage of my present humour. The communication between Holnicote and Mount Sorel being at last opened, there was constant intercourse between

the two families. The bridle road which made a circuit of several miles was abandoned; and the bridge over the stream became the usual way in which Reginald and myself exchanged visits, or rather places; for while he was for ever at Holnicote, at the feet of his charmer, I, who began to detest Holnicote, spent almost all my time at Mount Sorel, and chiefly in company with Perrott.

The schemes for advancing the object of universal suffrage, and annual parliaments, by other means than the old fashioned constitutional measure of parliamentary petitions, were now being carried forward with great spirit, though in secret. And there is something in the very nature of secret conspiracies, not disagreeable to minds so thoroughly embittered as mine.

As to Mr. Higgins, his principles upon these subjects were most simple ; he held the measure for just, legitimate, easy, and safe, as a plain straightforward method of correcting all abuses, which must approve itself at once, to every mind not blinded by prejudice, or misled by interest. It was a principle not to be disputed, except by slaves, knaves, or fools ; and every means was good, and every plan legitimate, that could assist in the attainment of such an object.

Mr. Higgins seldom pondered a matter: he seldom turned it this way and that, to consider it under varying aspects: he saw it, that was enough—as he saw it, so it was.... What force and what weakness in this sort of understanding! What force of purpose, what weakness of judgment! How dangerous, yet how useful, are these straightforward dealers in affairs.

Mr. de Vere and Mr. Higgins did not meet very often. After all, they did not like each other much. The masterly handling of Perrott forebade any thing like a genuine cordiality from arising between them, though at their first meeting they had seemed so inclined to be mutually pleased. He continued to maintain the jealousy of independence which he had awakened in Mr. Higgins, so as to render him on his guard against the influence of Mr. de Vere's urbanity, and his own inclination to respect his prejudices and feelings; while the very presence of Perrott was sufficient to keep alive in Mr. de Vere's mind, that sort of distasteful disgust with which he viewed the opinions and proceedings of the party to which Mr. Higgins belonged.

In the mean time, I was insensibly drawn into the vortex of politics; while Reginald and Clarice were realising that dream of almost perfect felicity which it is given to so few of us to know. Their marriage was fixed for the ensuing spring. Mount Sorel was to be exchanged for Reginald's maternal property in Northamptonshire, and to be settled upon Clarice and upon her eldest son, who was to unite the two names in one, and under the style of Vernon de Vere, carry down the much valued name.

It is possible that if it had been Mr. Higgins's own name which was thus to dance attendance upon that of another, his pride might have been alarmed; but as it was only the sacrifice of one adopted in his own foolish love days, as he called them, he permitted his son, under the same brief madness, to make the sacrifice to Mr. de Vere's ideas.

Reginald had none of this sort of pride; he understood Mr. de Vere's anxiety to perpetuate a name so ancient and celebrated, but any personal tenacity upon such a matter was quite alien to his feelings. Provided his Clarice was happy in her father's satisfaction, he cared not one jot whether it was to be as De Vere Vernon, or as Vernon de Vere.

The winter passed cheerily away. A beautiful riding horse, a present from her Reginald, served as the excuse for numberless delightful excursions into the neighbourhood, under the escort of Reginald. They were often accompanied by Mr. Higgins, who took pleasure in himself showing his favourite points to his fair future daughter-in-law, and enjoying her enthusiasm and admiration. The pale cheek of Clarice began to change its hue; every day she improved in beauty; her spirits recovered their tone, and often rose to almost childish gaiety. Surely never did life open under an aspect more benignant and unclouded, than before these excellent young creatures. The following letters which I have preserved will, however, better paint their feelings than any description of mine can do.

"*Reginald to Clarice.*

"Nov. 29th.

"I could not come to thee, my sweet one, to-day; I have been down towards Monmouth; I had heard of a mare that I thought might do. You should get more exercise, my love. You have been hidden in those shades of Holnicote, till you are like one of those flowers we picked up in the copse as we were walking

yesterday. Something *too* tender for the rough haps of this world, is my sweetest Clarice. She must now, she knows it, come forth from her peaceful little hidden world, and encounter with men and things, which will not always be in harmony with my sweet one's tenderness. We must make thee a little hardier, my love... And so, to begin, I have been and bought the mare we were talking of, and to-morrow my father promises to ride with us, and to take us round by the Vinscote lanes he was celebrating last night. *I* like it better otherwise, you may suppose; but he really is such a kind, worthy father to us, that I cannot help being a little of a hypocrite, and saying, 'Oh, Sir, by all means,' when I would fain say, 'By no manner of means.' It promises for a fine frost to-morrow. Write to me and tell me at what hour we shall call for you. Don't write one of those little three lined epistles that seem penned by the quill of a humming-bird's wing: scribble away, my Clarice, when you write to your for ever devoted Reginald."

"*Clarice to Reginald.*

"Nov. 30th.

"I shall be enchanted to try the horse you have bought for me, dear Reginald. I quite feel what you say about these pale, green, drawn-up plants, and quite long to *harden;* but I am a timid rider, so I hope your animal is of a very gentle sort. I shall enjoy your father's company very much. I think he has much more of my sort of passion for lanes and brooks than you have, Master Reginald, and I am sure what you

say of his kindness is most true. Do you know I like him exceedingly? Perhaps because he is your father? No—I think I should have liked him wherever I had met him. I delight in these sort of frank, open-hearted characters. I think my natural temper is of the same sort. I don't think that I have any taste for *fine ladyhood* at all. Don't think me a termagant, but I quite delight in the idea of that sort of contest with things, which you try to frighten me with. I have often fancied I should like to have been as that fair termagant we were reading of yesterday in 'Tasso,' and have fought by my lover's side. Strange fancy for a little quiet miss like me. Farewell. Here is a scrawl! —scrawl enough! And here is nonsense—nonsense enough even for you, is there not?"

"*Reginald to Clarice.*

"I am sorry about Edmund; your observations are perfectly just; he seems quite an altered person. I am afraid, my sweetest, one wound was, after all, deeper than we were either of us aware. However, to let that be, I wish he could find some better diversion than consorting so much with Perrott. That man is detestable to me, Clarice; I abominate him. His black countenance is but an index of his vile, black, envious heart. A busy, meddling, evil spirit: poisoning every one's happiness. What can our father see in the little ugly monster? and more—what can Edmund see in him? Edmund, whom I used to look up to as the best and wisest of human beings! the model, in my mind, of all that was right, just, and kind.

And now, I don't understand him; he is unjust, bitter, reserved; exactly the reverse of all he used to be. Well, we must leave him to time, and his own better genius; which would soon have set all this right if it had not been for that vile Perrott."

"*Clarice to Reginald.*

"That Perrott!..... And yet I wish you would not speak so bitterly even of him. Alas! dear Reginald, I have so much dread of violent and intemperate expressions. What good do they do? You will only irritate and make an enemy, by a contempt, which, forgive me, dear Reginald, it does not seem to me that you even attempt to disguise. These hatreds, dear Reginald, are such shocking things; they so increase mischief. I dare say that disagreeable Mr. Perrott only looks black because you look scornful. As for Edmund, what can we do? Let us trust that time will set all right. Edmund is so intrinsically good, that I am sure he will never deviate far. He is like the pendulum your father was explaining to me: an external force has set him a swinging, but he will settle in a right line at last. Pray tell your father, how your Clarice improves by his philosophy. When will he come again and teach me more of these things?"

"*Clarice to Reginald.*

....."Why, to tell you the truth, if I must tell you the truth, dear Reginald.... And to tell you the truth, seems I own, with me, not only a moral, but a positive necessity. Am I talking nonsense? I am sure you are not

wise enough, Sir, to tell me whether I am or no; for I never saw a young gentleman so careless of his philosophies. Well, there is an absolute necessity then, which constrains me to tell to a certain exacting Reginald, *every thing*—yes, every thing; prudent or imprudent, wrong or right: every thing... Well, then, I do think that your father is more inclined to like my father, than my father is to like your father. Now, I think one may understand this easily; my father is not of so *giving out* a temper as yours. You know what I mean—or perhaps you don't, *c'est égal*. Well, then, your father is on the higher ground; and forgive me, dearest Reginald, but I think, in spite of all the pride with which some people reproach my father, yours likes quite as much to occupy the higher ground as mine does. My father is in one important respect the obliged person; and if it is generous to confer, oh! how far more generous it is in some cases to receive! Your father is in a most agreeable situation, for such a liberal spirit as his: my father is after all in a false position."

"*Reginald to Clarice.*

"I have often felt it, my love, but have not so distinctly analysed it as you have done. Earnestly as I have desired to reconcile all difficulties, warmly as I have sympathised with Mr. de Vere's feelings and disappointments, I have beat my foolish brains in vain, to find an invention that will reconcile all things. This tiresome estate! One cannot help feeling that it ought to be *his;* that *he* ought to endow *us* with it..... I don't know whether it is a

proof of a mean and contemptible spirit on my part, but I own I rather like to be obliged. I am sure I have had ten thousand times more happiness in this arrangement, because I am indebted to my father's kindness for it, than if the thing had been all in my own power. But still your remark is just. A false position! Yes, children like to receive from their parents; that is natural, usual, common; but for parents from their children, even from their own children! That humbles a proud spirit like your father's. It must be so unnatural.

"I have been thinking whether it would be possible to propose an exchange; that he should take Mount Sorel, and we take Holnicote. I am sure, my loveliest, Holnicote, or any cote, would be paradise to me with you; and I feel there is something painful in our occupying Mount Sorel, and your father being here. Don't you feel it so, my sweetest? Do you think one might venture to try the ground? I must confess, my love, that Mr. de Vere is rather an awful being for me to deal with. I am a careless, straightforward sort of a fellow, as you by this time know very well, and I go floundering about as if I were walking in the dark when I have to do with characters that I cannot quite understand, and yet whose feelings I have such a horror of wounding."

"*Clarice to Reginald.*

...."Ah, my Reginald! That *was* what I have been feeling for some time. Our having Mount Sorel was not *his* having Mount Sorel. It was better than

strangers; but it was not quite.... it could not be, you know. I can't say about venturing to try the ground; my father is so susceptible upon these points; perhaps he would feel as if he were being laid under a double obligation. He certainly does not take *much* pleasure in the thought of *my* being mistress of Mount Sorel. Do you know that I have reason to feel sure that *the* Survey of which Edmund told us, those relics which he esteems so sacred, have never been taken out of that iron chest yet. I thought he would have visited them *now* with pleasure; but he does not. One thing, however, is an infinite gain; that horrible melancholy has altogether disappeared, the festering wound is healed. It is not all, as he would liked best to have had it; but Reginald, dear, generous Reginald! all your kind wishes and plans for the happiness of every one, have not been quite thrown away. Oh, no! My father is quite a different man. He is taking great interest, now, in what is going forward in the world; and he rides out, and visits his old friends. He is cheerful; there is a very great weight removed; there will be, it is said, an election soon at Clun, and my father is already beginning to bestir himself about the matter in a way quite different.... in short, all that frightful apathy and coldness to external things has disappeared. Oh! he is quite, quite a different being. Bless you, dear Reginald, for it all. But to return, if it could be done—if we could see my father at Mount Sorel.... I am sure I love Holnicote, dearly, and if I did not, what would that matter?"

"*Reginald to Clarice.*

..."It won't do, Clarice. Yesterday, when we were walking on the terrace, I determined to touch upon the subject. I began by asking your father to point out the landmarks to me. He directed my eye over the brown heathy hill, and showed me such small imperceptible hillocks and points. How well he knows them all! I began stammering—you know the great lubber always stammers when he approaches a subject of any delicacy—and said something about, that we were not the proper persons to occupy Mount Sorel, meaning you, my darling; than whom.... 'I don't exactly conceive you, Sir,' said he, coldly. 'Am I to understand by that insinuation, that Mr. Higgins is already beginning to regret his proposals.' Oh! far from that! my father is perfectly satisfied.... it was only.... that Clarice, that I.... we feel that we should be much happier.... if we were on the Holnicote, and Mr. de Vere on the Mount Sorel side of those landmarks.

"'Reginald,' he said, coldly, 'you are a very kind-hearted fellow. Every body must soon see that; but, take care, young man, in your desire to serve and help all the world, that you are not too busy: obliging those who detest obligation, and serving those who only desire to be left to themselves. I thank you for your well-intended hint, but I will not disguise that I should feel deeply offended by any attempt at renewing the subject.' So that, my dear, is all I took by my motion."

"*Clarice to Reginald.*

...."My generous! kindest! dearest Reginald! And was that all you took by your motion, as you say. Ah! my Reginald, if the gratitude and love of your own Clarice be any thing, you took a great, great store of that. Well, my love, we must think of *that* no more; we must make them all as happy as we can, and in their own way. And, Reginald, you would not know my mother again; she is grown quite gay; she has been sending to Madame Louison for all sorts of pretty caps for herself, and hats for me. I have got an enchanting new riding hat, and am dying to put it on, and to have another scamper over the downs. How it does rain and blow this day! If it would but clear to-morrow, we should get to the hills beyond Clun. Ah! a rainbow! It will be fine to-morrow—and to-morrow—and to-morrow—."

"*Reginald to Clarice.*

"Queen Anne-street, Dec. 21st.

"Here I arrived safely last night, after such a tiresome journey. My father persuaded me not to ride post, which I had better far have done. I have been to my lawyer's; all sorts of difficulties and delays; but he promises me in a month. Good heavens! I had need of the patience of that most patient of patriarchs to bear it with tolerable fortitude. I was about to go into a passion with the gentle quill-driver; but then I recollected a certain little tyrant who had forbidden such childish extravagances in her poor slave. So, then, I went to White's to hear the news. The whole town

seems in a ferment. I never heard any thing so violent as the talk is. I shall go to the House and hear Fox to-night; there is to be a grand onset. Fox is, they say, magnificent; Pitt the same. Just as your party is, so is your orator. Pitt is Cicero; Fox, Demosthenes; Burke the dinner-bell; they all go out when he begins to harangue—pleasant that! But, upon my honour, I think the world is going mad....."

"*Reginald to Clarice.*

"*I* shall go mad, here are my father and Edmund come up, and my father talking of going to Paris! He swears the papers will not be ready this two months, and vows he will be back as soon as they are done. But what must he go to Paris for? Yet, to tell truth, I think both he and Edmund are better anywhere than here. They made me go with them to one of the meetings at their Corresponding Society, last night. I must own it did seem to me such a farce! such a playing at patriotism! such vulgar affectation about most of the fellows. They seemed to think themselves such stars! Saw Horne Tooke—*he* does not look like a pretender; at least, he's one of the cleverest looking fellows I have often seen; but it's plain he's making a cat's paw of *them*. You should have seen Perrott fawning upon the great man. Imagine our black, sulky Perrott, fawning and flattering, and booing like any Mac Sycophant. Oh! I thought it a sickening sight, and felt quite vexed at my father, and provoked beyond measure at Edmund... to see them look so sober, and so much in

earnest, and as if they were really humbugged with all this stuff.

"*Reginald to Clarice.*

"They are off—gone to Paris, and Perrott with them; and I declare, if it had not been for certain tender ties that bind me to this much-abused country of mine, I should have been off too, to witness the hurlyburly. All is in a desperate state there. The Duke of Brunswick's manifesto has done a world of mischief; every body but the most ultra declare that. What says Mr. de Vere to it? I really wish, in reverence be it spoken, that Mr. de Vere would come to town; nothing allays the ferment in one's own mind, like witnessing the ferment in that of others. I think if he saw the extravagance to which his own side push their opinions, he would in some degree modify his. At least, I am sure nothing makes so peaceable a citizen of me, as going to a meeting of a London Corresponding Society. In the meantime, the lawyer goes on as if we lived in the times of Hilpa and Zilpa: and if he does not make haste, I shall grow unruly, send him and all his musty papers to the deuce, leave all to the best and kindest father that ever man had, and fairly come down and run away with thee."

"*Clarice to Reginald.*

...."Oh my Reginald! don't say you would have gone to Paris if you could. My father is so much excited; so vexed at Edmund for going; so angry—alas! my Reginald, as one subject of discomfiture disappears in this world, how many others seem to arise. My poor father,

now that he is pretty well at ease upon *one* point, seems to have time to vex himself about others. His feelings upon the subject of politics are very strong. I will not say *violent*; because I *do* think, dear Reginald, that it is a very terrible thing to hear of all these dreadful commotions and wicked murders, and my father is, I am sure, quite right; he has a very fine judgment you know; and, indeed, Mr. Lovel, who is the most temperate and candid man in the world, seems very much of his opinion.... But then .... oh ! that my father could but *feel* his opinions like Mr. Lovel ! He takes things so bitterly; he is so very, very angry. I wish your father could have helped going to Paris just at this moment. It is a pity.... We had such a scene yesterday when the letters and papers came in ! and when my poor mother ventured to put in a little moderating word, it only made matters worse. And *all* are confounded under one universal censure. Every one who has had the slightest hand in forwarding this awful French Revolution. Now I have heard you say, dear Reginald, that there were many most patriotic and admirable men confounded with very selfish and unprincipled ones, and under the general name of democrats: do you recollect how you smiled at my horror of democrats? No, I remember, it was poor Edmund. However, this indiscriminate censure does good to no one; does harm to no one, I should say ; it rather provokes one to defend those who are the objects of such bitter, unmitigated contempt. It is not a good way. Heigh ho ! When shall you be back, my Reginald? You have a way of getting me through all my little difficulties.... My mother seems not very well to-day. Poor, gentle mother !

she has seemed so much happier lately.... but I don't think we are very good economists of happiness at Holnicote.... I think people understand better now how to make others happy than they used to do. We will try whether we cannot a little improve, at least in the plan of life.... I think pride is one of the greatest sources of unhappiness. What is called an *honourable* pride. I have none of it. As you said once of yourself: is not that to be very mean? I don't know; I would not be mean; yet how light and gay one's heart seems to beat, free from all these troubles! I wonder how it happens that I so little care about this grand de Vere blood. To tell you a truth, Reginald, I don't care for it in the least; it has been the cause of too much unhappiness here, for me to value it. Other things there are in this world that seem to me, in comparison, of such *priceless* value! And ah! how rich in these am I!"

"*Reginald to Clarice.*

..."It is too provoking. There they are in Paris, and now all the papers will be ready in about three weeks. When my father is once in Paris, there is no getting him away; but I must write, and beg, implore, torment, command! He is the very best-tempered, kind-hearted man in the world, when he is not vexed; and I will conjure him away from all the temptations of that exciting city. I agree with you, my love, in all you say, or rather hint, in your charming letter. Mr. de Vere has, I feel, a something in his temperament so excitable, that when one subject of irritation is removed, another is certain to succeed. Some men are, unfortunately for them-

selves, so constructed: it is their natural temperament. But really, every one is so violent now, that it is not *his* temperence, but Mr. Lovel's moderation, which is out of the common. Society seems quite divided here. The dearest ties of intimacy, friendships, and even relationships, are rent asunder It is a perfect storm! So much that is reasonable might be said on both sides: but nobody listens to reason: reproaches, and invectives are showered on both hands with equal violence, and I believe, pretty nearly with equal justice! How will this vehement contention terminate?

"My little love, when we are safe at Mount Sorel, buried in our sweet and cheerful solitude, we must watch in patience the storm, and temper it as we best can and may, to all. In the meantime, I am uneasy about your dear—*our* dear, gentle mother. You are nursing her carefully, I know; and Tuesday next I am coming down to help you."

"*Reginald to Clarice.*

"Mount Sorel.

"You looked sadly jaded and tired, my loved one, when I left you last night. Your mother is better: do not, I beseech you, weary yourself with watchings that are no longer necessary. Had any thing happened that vexed you, just before I came in? Your eyes looked red, and you turned away your face to the window, as if to hide your uneasiness from your Reginald. Ah! my love, don't try at that game. It is a useless trouble, my darling; you are a poor dissembler; and what was I created for but to joy in your joy, sorrow in your

sorrow; to love you, esteem you, dote upon you, and find my best, my only happiness, in the privilege of being your friend."

"*Clarice to Reginald.*

"It is the only subject upon which I would, if I could, dissemble even with you; but indeed, as you say, it is a vain attempt. And then you are so good, and candid; so just, and temperate in your judgments; and then you are *indeed* my friend. My best and truest friend! It was the old worry—my poor father. He had worked himself up to such a state; he spoke so bitterly of our poor Edmund; I could not help crying a little; but it was soon over. Don't be uneasy for me, my Reginald; now my mother is better, I shall soon be quite well...."

CHAPTER XII.

Yet when the boisterous winds break out,
And raging waves do swell,
The scaly bark now heaves to heaven,
And sinks again to hell.
Thus change in every thing we see,
And nothing constant seems to be.

SIR WALTER RALEIGH.

THE winter was past, the spring was come—spring of that fatal, eventful year, which covered Europe with mourning. Which witnessed the overthrow of its most ancient monarchy, and the downfall of that new constitution of 1790, which, like a tree transplanted in its full growth, and not rendered adherent by the slow increase of succeeding time, fell prostrate at the very first blow levelled against it. It was succeeded by a wildness of anarchy, an extravagance of misrule; by the fierce sway of that barbarous proscribing triumvirate, before whose deeds the worst pages of the history of the Roman civil dissensions would pale.

The madness, the infatuation of those days! The incredible cruelty, tyranny, and wildness of the oppressors, the incredibly passive submission of the op-

pressed, fill us, even now, with horror, astonishment, and perplexity.

The contest was less bloody upon our side of the Channel; we can hardly say it was less furious. The violence of party feeling shattered all the bonds which unite society. The domestic hearth became the arena of the bitterest animosities, and families and the nearest connexions were divided by the most unmitigated animosity. Men carried a passion and vehemence into their political quarrels, with which you of this day are happily little acquainted; and women, far from endeavouring to allay the ferment, exasperated it by all the warmth of their own excited feelings and imaginations. Not alone the *tricoteuses*, as they sat in their tribunes in the hall of the conventions, but too many women in every rank and station of society, thought it became them to exasperate and promote the furies of opposition.

Mr. Higgins and I were by this time deeply engaged in those intrigues which, by their consequences, gave rise to the broils I have alluded to; and our opinions, excited by communication with the more daring spirits with whom we now associated, had become exasperated in the highest degree against a government whose measures were certainly not conciliating; though whether, under the circumstances, any wiser ones could have been adopted, remains, I think, to be proved. Certainly they were most difficult times.

One feature of those remarkable days was, the breathless rapidity with which events followed each other.

Six months was as half a century, in the astonishing succession of revolutions, not only in governments, but opinions, which took place.

Reflect, that from the meeting of the states-general in 1789, to the battle of Waterloo, is only twenty-six years, only four years less than the period which has elapsed from that mighty day to the moment at which the old man now sits writing—and ask yourself whether we did not live fast then?

We have seen by the correspondence of the lovers, that a succession of delays on the part of their lawyers had still obliged them to postpone their marriage; and that Mr. Higgins and I, contrary to the wishes of all parties, had determined in the interval to revisit Paris.

There we went, accompanied by Mr. Perrott, and there we remained for some time; fascinated by the exciting events passing around us, and enjoying the "enthusiasm of emotion," to adopt an expression of the time, in the highest perfection.

We were at Paris on the 10th of August, 1792, and witnesses of the awful events of that tremendous day.

Again I heard the tocsin sounding drearily through the air. Not summoning those whose business it was to maintain the *law*, to support its sanctions against the usurpations of force; but calling upon the people to exercise the right they arrogated to themselves, of insurrection! and to level at one sweep every banner of that law, by the exercise of a force, irresistible, unlimited, irresponsible! And at the command of whom?

No man asked; no one knew. No one has to this day ever exactly ascertained.

The tocsin sounded, the turbulent sections of Paris assembled to a man. The wild waves of the excited people rolled forward, hoarse like the voice of many waters, and swept the whole edifice of constituted society away.

What a night was that, which preceded that day of *confusion and massacre!*

I was walking with Higgins and one of our republican friends upon the terrace of the old Louvre. It was a beautiful, calm night, and all noise and confusion had subsided; the people were resting, as it were, upon their arms; sleeping in the streets in expectation of the conflict of the morrow. A scattered shot; the roll of a distant cannon; the beat, at intervals, of the *générale;* was all that was heard. Barbaroux, with inconceivable audacity, had brought his Marseillais up to Paris, to second by their artillery the political enterprises of his party. These patriots had traversed France, marching with cannon loaded and matches lighted, paying their rations at their own expense, and singing their own magnificent hymn. Their pieces were now pointed at the Tuileries.

I remember talking with the two or three deputies who had joined us, and asking them the meaning of these things. They seemed as ignorant as I could be myself. The people were in insurrection, that was all they knew; and the people being in insurrection, seemed answer sufficient to all inquiries. What the people in insurrection intended to do, what they exactly wanted, or

what they proposed, was lost in obscurity. I believe the people as little knew themselves.

I did not take part in the bloody contest of the ensuing day, but I witnessed it. I saw the cowardly slaughter which some people have justified by the name of battle: the brave Swiss overwhelmed by the overpowering force of thousands, massacred martyrs to a soldier's honour! Defending to the death, the man they had pledged themselves to serve.

I saw the magnificent palace of many kings reeking with blood—a butcher's slaughter-house.

I saw the *tyrant*—the poor, patient, innocent lamb of a tyrant; who, not even to rescue himself and all he held dear at this turning point of his fortunes, could be brought to shed his people's blood. I saw him followed by his helpless and terrified family, and pursued by the execrations of that black, unhallowed crowd, the very dregs of that degraded population which lies at the root of society in most great cities, and which the inconceivable madness of the hour had elevated to a bad, but momentary importance. I saw the white dresses of his queen, his sister, and his children, gleaming amid the dark heaving waves of that dense multitude, as it swayed to and fro, filling the air with a dismal confusion of groans, yells, and insulting cries; as these last of a long descended line of princes traversed the heaving mass to seek refuge in the hall of the Legislative Assembly, the highest constituted authority in the nation, but at that moment utterly unable to protect its chief magistrate from the insults of the basest miscreants —and yet, I could not learn.

No; I returned to England just as infatuated as ever. It seemed as if the very excesses we witnessed, excited us to violence, as the sight of blood is known to excite brute creatures; strange, inconceivable intoxication! which we shared with numbers. Briefly, we returned prepared to defend, and some of us not unwilling to emulate, the barbarous extravagance we had witnessed.

I shall not easily forget my father's grave and shocked look when I broached before him my present notions.

"Depend upon it, Edmund," he said, "upon such wild principles as you are advocating, no society can, by possibility, long continue to exist. The right of insurrection, of which you are talking, I beg your pardon, so much nonsense, what is it in fact but the mere exertion of brute force against the sanctions of law? You seem to look upon law as if it were merely an instrument in use to *oppress* instead of to *protect* mankind. We shall soon see what will be the fate of a nation that has thus cast away every restraint upon its own blind intemperance and folly."

But I was too much excited to listen to what I considered as narrow and pusillanimous views of the most exalted questions. As for Mr. de Vere, anxious to avoid coming into collision with what I regarded as his prejudices, I carefully avoided the subject before him; looking upon him with somewhat of the contemptuous indulgence with which one regards a child, or superannuated person, talking of that which they know nothing about.

My feelings towards Reginald and Clarice were rendered still more painful by this state of my mind; I felt

alienated from them both; we seemed to have no sentiments in common. During the course of my whole long life my feelings have never been so little what I could look back upon with satisfaction.

Reginald and Mr. Higgins escaped a certain uncomfortable coldness which arose between me and mine. He loved his father warmly and clung to him closely, in spite of the divergence of their opinions. Mr. Higgins, indeed, excited as he was, was not irritable and embittered like me. He was happy; and his political enthusiasm was, after all, rather a matter of his head than of his heart. He loved his son; tolerated his *moderantism*, as it was then called; and was kind enough to forgive him for retaining opinions beyond which he had so extravagantly progressed.

I think he on purpose avoided going to Holnicote as long as he decently could, from a sort of apprehension of disturbing the present amity by coming in contact with Mr. de Vere. But this could not last long.

A general invitation to dinner arrived, in which, as Mr. Perrott was known to be at Mount Sorel, he was included. And in an evil hour it was accepted.

It was now the latter end of August, but the weather was intensely hot: I think we never now experience the excessive heat of those summers. Every thing around looked quite sicklied with the heat; the lawn before Mount Sorel was parched up, and dry and bare as the desert; all nature seemed panting under the oppression.

The day came when we were to dine at Mount Sorel, and it was the most oppressively hot of any we had yet endured.

The thermometer was standing at ninety-two degrees in the shade; not a breath stirring—it was really suffocating.

Mr. Higgins, who was usually a remarkably good tempered man, seemed this day quite irritated by the heat he was suffering. Mr. Perrott, his coat thrown off, and waistcoat unbuttoned, was puffing up and down in his shirt sleeves: nothing could make that good citizen quiet: and his continual fidgetting about the room increased the irritation of us all, as thrown upon different chairs, we endeavoured in vain to read or otherwise employ ourselves.

Reginald was lying half asleep, upon a sofa, listening to the buzzing of the insects: his air of dreamy repose, and perfect contentment, seemed to vex his father and me, even more than Perrott's fidgets.

"What an odious *corveé!*" at last Mr. Higgins began, "to have to go out to-day and dine with that tiresome piece of starched formality at Holnicote. Edmund, my lad, do you not think it somewhat hard that you and I must go to that most stupid of mortal places, because that simpleton there chooses to be in love? See there!... how he lies, the picture of indolent enjoyment, thinking of his *Dahlia:* never troubling his head about the plague he puts upon you or me!"

"Oh! forgive me, Sir!" said Reginald, starting, opening his eyes, and turning round, and looking not unlike some caged animal suddenly aroused by a poke of his

the efforts of that amiable individual had not been thrown away, as was soon too fatally displayed. A deep jealousy and dislike of Mr. de Vere had been by degrees rooted in Mr. Higgins' mind by the unceasing insinuations of the demagogue: a man, who had he been labouring in his true vocation, ought to have been poisoning the minds of his fellow-men by editing some infamous daily paper in emulation of Hebert or Marat.

I did not after all, in reality, like Perrott myself, and was not sorry to see him attacked by Reginald; there was something in the arrogance of the man that provoked me beyond measure. I little suspected how much deep-laid design and ambitious calculation lay concealed under his proceedings.

"Well, I agree with Perrott," said Mr. Higgins, *in* a provoking manner. "I think De Vere is as insolent, as ignorant, as conceited a piece of presumption, as ever prided himself upon nothing at all."

"Who but he!" cried Perrott. "When he lords it over this fine estate and noble mansion; which the unparalleled generosity of a man he is not fit to hold the candle to, abandons for the gratification of his insolent pride!"

Mr. Higgins winced, as he always did, when Perrott touched upon that subject.

Reginald grew quite red.

"Upon my honour, Sir," said he, starting up from his sofa and going up to Perrott, "it's well for you that you are a *very* particular friend of my father's, or.... but nevertheless, I will tell you this: if you presume to

meddle in my affairs, or to speak with disrespect of the man I am about to call father, I shall make no ceremony of showing you in terms intelligible enough, how I think busy meddlers in other men's matters ought to be treated."

"At him, man!" shouted Mr. Higgins, "at him, man! Why, Perrott, are you beat already? At him again — shake the puppy well! Give him as good as he brings! Show him you don't care the snuff of a candle for his threats! What, chop fallen, my hero?"

As Perrott, with a complexion almost green in its paleness and a malignant leer upon his countenance, walked sullenly away, and through the open door into the hall.

"There, Reginald: he's gone. You're as rude as a bear, Sir, let me tell you, to that man. He's my friend, and I don't like it, Sir."

"As for rudeness, and all that," said Reginald, in a rebellious tone, "I thought it was agreed here, that we had all shaken hands with good manners, long ago; and I, for one, am not going to use gold-headed canes, when others are fighting with clubs."

"Oh, ho!" cried Mr. Higgins, sneeringly, "our manners are not fine enough for you! eh, my young gentleman? we're getting too fine for our company, are we? we who frequent such grand folks!.... You're there, are ye, Mr. Reginald? Plain manners and plain truths don't suit your nicety—eh, Sir?"

Reginald made no answer.

"Sulky, are we? Why don't you speak, you

painted puppy?" cried Mr. Higgins, with increasing asperity.

I never saw him so thoroughly rough, cross, and unreasonable, as that day. It was probably that his mind had been long secretly poisoned against his son: but—permit the passing remark—how much were the evils of that sort of temporary irritation which at times beset the best of us, increased by the contempt for habitual politeness and good manners which was then in vogue: politeness which makes men modify the expression, if they cannot altogether conquer such acrimonious feelings.

Reginald had thrown off such restraints in the present instance almost advisedly; he would not, as he said, ward off clubs with walking-sticks: he had a good deal of the rough energetic force of his father's character lying concealed under his lively, good-natured manner; and that sort of brute energy was aroused, when he found himself consorting with brutes.

Still no answer.

Nothing irritates a man in some moods so much as silence: it seemed at the moment to drive Mr. Higgins almost mad.

"Why don't you speak?" he cried. "At least, Mr. Magnificent, you may condescend to inform your father why you presume to be insolent to his own friend in his own house."

"Because the man he chooses to honour by calling his friend, is a pragmatical, meddling, mischief-making fool; and if he does presume to put his finger into my pie, see if I wont give him as sound a thrashing as ever

the rascal had in his life," cried Reginald, passionately. "Have I spoken to your satisfaction at last, Sir?"

"My dear Reginald!" I exclaimed.

"Hold your tongue, Edmund, don't talk to me. You know as well as I know, what a hound this is. How can *you* be so base? you, Edmund! as hold out the right hand of fellowship to such a scoundrel!"

"Am I to bear this?" cried Perrott, suddenly re-entering the room. "Am I to bear this, Citizen Higgins? I tell you...."

"Eavesdroppers," cried Reginald, contemptuously. "Oh, Sir! there are proverbs about listeners," eyeing him from head to foot.

"I hold you beneath contempt," responded the other, turning away, but not one whit abashed. "I could pity you, my friend; I see where this *fair* influence is leading your son; well, well, well, I pity him—I pity him."

"Reginald," said Mr. Higgins, with a grave displeasure which I had never seen him assume before, "the good manners you boast of having learned among your new connexion, show themselves in a strange fashion. Ask Mr. Perrott's pardon directly. I wont have any man, Sir, treated in my house with impertinence. What do you mean?"

"Just what I said," replied his son: but suddenly checking himself, he came up to his father and said, "Oh, Sir! I am forgetting myself. I beg your pardon. I have behaved very rudely and improperly to *you*. I beg your pardon ten thousand times over."

The clock in the hall struck four.

I started up. "Four o'clock!" I cried; "and at four o'clock we dine."

Reginald was dressed, so was I; I had not laid aside the humanising custom of making a toilet in the middle of the day, in spite of my new notions. Mr. Perrott hastily resumed his coat; Mr. Higgins, evidently still very much ruffled, took his hat which was lying on a table near him.

"How shall we go? We are too late for dinner as it is, talking all this nonsense."

"Through the wood," I said.

And through the wood we proceeded.

Good humour was not restored. We had been interrupted by the striking of the clock, before Mr. Higgins or his son had either of them time to recover their usual cordiality of feeling; the apology Reginald had so hastily made had not been accepted; Perrott looked the picture of sulky defiance; Mr. Higgins quite out of sorts; Reginald vexed and uneasy; and I, most thoroughly uncomfortable too. A party less inclined to be pleased, or to give pleasure, never set out upon a visit.

We walked down the path between the overhanging hazels and ash trees of the copse, threading it one after another in Indian file; so that there was no opportunity for any of that little exchange of a few sentences, which soon sets matters right between those who love one another, as Mr. Higgins and his son did.

Mr. Higgins walked first, and at a brisk, decided pace, in spite of the heat which, indeed, was a good deal modified by the over-arching trees. Next to him followed

Perrott, endeavouring at a trot to keep up with the rapid strides of his patron. Reginald came after, whistling with a sort of careless defiance, and breaking off the small branches and flinging them away as he passed.

I brought up the rear. I do not think I was in a better humour than the rest.

We crossed the bridge, threaded the private walk, came through the iron gate upon the terrace, and rang at the door on the garden side of the house.

The thermometer at Holnicote was not much less high than our own.

The ladies had been dressed some time and waiting for us, for it was far beyond the hour fixed for dinner. Mr. de Vere was pacing the drawing-room in no very enviable temper; he had that morning witnessed the loss of that election, to which Clarice in her letters alludes; the day had been carried by the popular party.

Mr. de Vere had returned from the borough town excessively irritated by much that had passed: his dinner, too, had been kept waiting, and all men of an irritable temperament are excited to quite a painful degree, by that gnawing uncomfortable feeling which waiting long for a meal occasions. His temper, indeed, had not improved during the last six months. The turn affairs in the political world had taken, was a source of unceasing and most painful irritation to him; and he had acquired a habit of indulging himself in a violence of expression upon subjects of this nature, quite foreign to the usual chastised dignity of his demeanour. It seemed as if he thought that upon this one subject, a gentleman, and a

man of spirit could not feel too keenly, or express himself too violently. Mr Higgins' journey to Paris, just at this juncture, had displeased and annoyed him excessively. He had of course no right to express disapprobation upon such a subject, but he showed it by a thousand insinuations; and the habit of vehement declamation in which he permitted himself, had acquired new asperity since this circumstance had taken place.

The young people, and those two kind friends, the tender mother, and the anxious and judicious governess, would have felt considerable uneasiness at the prospect of the ensuing meeting, had it been to have taken place in an earlier period of the connexion; but now, any disagreeable collision that might arise seemed really of no very material importance. The papers were come down; the wedding day was about to be fixed; the two fathers would have to meet but once more for the purpose of reading and signing the settlements;—and after that, their different course of life, and opposing opinions, would evidently separate them so far, that little real diminution of the happiness of their mutual children need to be feared.

They all anticipated a somewhat disagreeable day; but this day once passed over, the rest would follow of course, and all be speedily and happily terminated.

I had not entered the house at Holnicote, nor seen Clarice since my return. The old beatings of my heart again began to torment me, as we crossed the terrace and entered by the well-known glass-door. Just as it opened, a sudden gust of wind, and the rising of several black clouds on all sides, which we had not

perceived as we passed through the thick copse, gave signal of an approaching thunder-storm. Indeed, we had scarcely time to enter the house before a loud clap of thunder was followed by a torrent of rain, and the air became suddenly darkened.

Amid the bursts of wind, the clatter of the rain, the loud crashing of the thunder, we entered the drawing-room.

It is present to me at this moment, dark with the heavy shadows of the storm, and illuminated by the flashes of the lightning. As the door opened, she, a beautiful white, shining vision, appeared to my eyes, like a celestial angel between the parting clouds. She seemed to me to be absolutely glistening, when her light, transcendently beautiful figure rose before me, just as a bright flash of lightning struck through the room.

Mrs. de Vere and Mrs. Fermor were sitting in the old place on the sofa, at the top of the room. Mr. de Vere's dark figure advanced towards us: there was little cordiality in the manner of his reception of Mr. Higgins, and a very marked and haughty coolness towards Mr. Perrott. Me he scarcely noticed, and only nodded to Reginald; but really there was such a pother of the elements over our heads, that we could scarcely hear each other speak, and I little troubled myself to observe our reception at the time, though I have recollected it since.

My eyes were, as I have said, fixed upon the beautiful form of my still too dear Clarice.

One happy beaming glance the lovers exchanged,

which spoke volumes to my heart. As I came forward hesitating, as usual, and heavier, for I felt as if I were grown bigger and heavier than ever—gnome as I was, greeting this light and lovely sylph and fairy—she gave me her hand with the most winning softness, and an easy kindness and cordiality of manner, that restored me in some degree to myself. I sat down by her, and we began to talk as well as we could, but the noise of the storm was tremendous.

Dinner was soon announced, and we all went into the dining-room and sat down; but the clatter was so great we could hardly hear each other's voices.

What passed at dinner I scarcely remember; but after the ladies had retired, we were obliged to call for candles: and it was by candlelight, while the hoarse thunder rolled, crackled, and rattled round the sky, while bright flashes of lightning glared round the horizon, while the clattering hail, mingled with the heavy rain, pelted on the windows, that the fiend of discord was unloosed, and we began to talk *politics*.

Which was the madman who flung the firebrand among us, I cannot positively say. I believe, however, that it was not the mere effect of accident. I believe that Perrott intentionally introduced the subject. We began quietly enough, but we could not be quiet long.

The storm of domestic contention was soon louder than the roar of the wildest elements. The surging tempest without, was silence to the loud debate within.

It is all a dizzy scene of confusion to me. To what a pitch of desperate rage and violence their passions at

length mounted, would in these days be hardly credited. I saw both Mr. Higgins and Mr. de Vere crimson with passion, their eyes starting out of their sockets, start from their chairs in fierce defiance of each other. I saw Perrott sitting quietly by, sneering like a fiend, and enjoying, and exciting, as I plainly saw, the fire. I saw the generous Reginald fling himself between the combatants, only to get abused and insulted by both. I witnessed passions all let loose, long hidden hatred all disclosed, words passing that could never never be recalled; till wild with rage, and maddened by mutual insults, they parted. Mr. Higgins, snatching his hat, with gestures of uncontrollable fury, broke away in the midst of a tremendous burst of thunder, and was followed by Perrott. Reginald and I remained standing by the table, thunderstruck at the violence of the scene we had witnessed.

I saw his countenance, his aghast look of despair, and I pitied him from my heart.

There was a silence of a few moments. The passionate denunciations with which Mr. Higgins had quitted the room, still ringing in our ears; followed by the loud bang of the house door, as he closed it after him.

Mr. de Vere was positively white with anger. He took a glass of wine, swallowed it hastily, then turning to Reginald, he said, haughtily and coldly,

"After what has passed between your father and me, it is of course needless to say that any future intercourse with the man who has dared to insult me so grossly, is utterly out of the question. And as any

communication between you and me must, under the circumstances, be equally disagreeable, it is my desire that here all acquaintance may close. I could be sorry that things have proceeded so far, but it is *never* too late to terminate an engagement formed, after all, in defiance of my own secret misgivings, and which it is now evident can only be productive of disappointment and mortification to all parties. I have the honour to wish you a good evening," and he left the room.

The cry which Reginald gave, I shall never forget to my dying day.

He lifted his clasped hands above his head, then sank upon a chair, and buried his head upon his hands; he was as one stunned for a moment; then, starting up, wild like the rest with the passions of that fatal evening, he cursed the dissensions of the times, the opinions of his father, and turning fiercely upon me, began to abuse me for my relations with that infamous political set with whom I consorted.

I had pity, and I had patience; I bore this outbreak as the real friendship I entertained for my poor Reginald demanded.

At length a footman entered, to clear away: this brought Reginald to his recollection. He endeavoured to compose himself; and turning to the servant, desired him to carry a message to Mr. de Vere begging for a moment's audience.

The servant in a short time returned with the answer, that Mr. de Vere could see no one that night, and that the family were preparing to retire to bed.

I thought I heard a faint shriek as some doors opened,

at a distance. Reginald was too much absorbed with his own feelings to hear it; it was not repeated; and turned as it were literally out of the house, we were obliged to submit, and to depart. Reginald rushed into the night; black, wild, and stormy as it was; and I, filled with compassion, followed him.

What a night! How the wind roared and swept by us, bending the crashing bushes to the earth, while the whole horizon seemed one flash of flame! followed by intervals of the most intense and pitchy darkness! How the hail fell in torrents! How the thunder pealed!

But what were the ragings of the elements to us; reckless, we rushed into the middle of the storm. We had gone out by the front door; we soon traversed the park; and getting into the lanes, hurried on, ignorant and careless where we were going.

Reginald was like a madman. The wild contests of the evening had made madmen of us all: how much more of him. He walked vehemently onward: heedless of where he went, or of the storm that pealed over our heads.

I know not how many hours we had thus spent, exposed to all the inclemency of the weather, and wetted to the skin, when suddenly, as if quite exhausted, Reginald sat down upon a bank by the side of the road, declaring he could go no farther.

"Leave me here, Edmund," said he, "let me alone. Thank you, my best of fellows; but it's all over with me; I think they've broken my heart."

"Nay, cheer up! take courage, Reginald," I said, as

cheerfully as I could. "This is but a storm, it will be all over to-morrow."

"No, Edmund," he said, "I see how it is; after such looks, such words, as passed this evening, reconciliation is impossible. They always have hated one another: *now*, they know it. My Clarice! My Clarice! we are parted for ever....."

And with a cry of anguish, his courage gave way; and dropping his head, he abandoned himself to tears.

I was melted to the very soul.... All my bad feelings yielded before this distress; I suddenly became as a new man. My selfish passion was, as by a miracle, converted into the most generous interest for both. Oh miracle! worked within the soul! More than healing to the lame; more than hearing to the deaf; more than sight to the blind. "Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing."

A burden was lifted as of lead from my breast. I was regenerate. Blessed, blessed mystery! the health of my soul was restored. I knew it, by the warm unmingled sympathy and interest I felt for them both. I felt the blest renewal of those living waters of truth and affection, so long dried up within me, now gushing warm and free! Forgive me, that even in this supreme moment of the fate of those you must care for so much more than ever you can care for me—forgive me that I pause one instant to record, what was also the crisis of my own inner existence.

The rain had ceased; the night was far advanced; the low moaning of the subsiding storm alone was heard. The

distant roll of the retiring thunder: the solemn darkness of that cloudy night, with its heavy retreating clouds, like the skirts of a mighty battle! The stars were glimmering at fitful intervals, through the hanging copse and branches that nearly roofed the deep lane in which we were.

Reginald was sitting upon the bank, and I standing by him. He continued to weep; and his breast heaved like that of a child, with his sorrow.

"Let us go home, my dear fellow," at last I said, after having allowed this burst of emotion time to relieve itself. "Come, Reginald! let us go home. Don't take the thing so to heart; they cannot be so absurd and so childish, as not to forget this unfortunate quarrel. Before morning, they will both be eager to make apologies, depend upon it; for it is impossible to say, which was most in the wrong. Your father is any thing but implacable; Mr. de Vere is a gentleman, and a man of the world. This storm will blow over. See, the clouds are already clearing away, and the heavens will be as serene as ever!"

Reginald shook his head mournfully.

"It is very kind of you, Edmund.... You are an excellent fellow..... I see you are, I always thought you so," and he took and pressed my hand. "Let us, as you say, go home. I feel as I never felt before—something here," putting his hand to his heart. "I have hardly the strength of an infant, the power of my limbs seems gone."

I was obliged to help him to rise from the bank. I put his arm in mine; and decrepit, bent together like an old man, I assisted him along.

It was not alone his own disappointment: it was the distress his good and honest heart had experienced at seeing two men whom he so loved and honoured thus forgetting themselves, thus disgraced by their violence, by the utter want of self-command they had both betrayed. He was deeply wounded in all those feelings of reverence which it had been his delight to cherish; and he felt assured that neither of these two weak and passionate men could ever thoroughly respect each other again, even granting that they could be brought to forgive each other. Reginald, who knew human nature full as well as I did, divined that the more they each felt themselves to blame, the more impossible it would be to bend their proud spirits to apology.

CHAPTER XIII.

Bear up,
Yet still bear up. No bark did e'er,
By stooping to the storm of fear,
Escape the tempest's wrath.

DR. BEAUMONT.

IT must have been two o'clock, at least, when we at length reached home.

I took Reginald, who was shivering violently, up to his room, assisted him to undress, and saw him into bed. He thanked me affectionately, again wrung my hand, but said he should be better able to compose himself if left alone. So I went to my own chamber, and went to bed, too; but it was impossible to sleep.

That shriek which I alone had heard, that faint cry of agony which had sounded through the opening door, still rang in my ears. Full well I knew that voice, which never deceived me. She had heard all, I doubted not. Had her heart given way at this sudden destruction of all her little edifice of happiness? How was it with her?

Then I tried to console myself with reflecting upon

the childishness of the vehemence which had given rise to this sudden quarrel. It seemed to me impossible that two men of sense, when they awoke calmly in the morning, could persist in the intemperate violence of the preceding evening. I reflected to myself, that they must both feel ashamed of their conduct, and equally desirous to bury the events of this most unfortunate meeting in oblivion. Yet still an anxious, trembling doubt would chill me. I recollected the stern haughtiness so often manifested by the one, and the obstinate adherence to his own opinions which distinguished the other. It was but too possible that each might consider the other as alone to blame, and in that case, any thing like apology or concession on either side was impossible. After a very restless night, I rose late. I went to Reginald's room as soon as I was dressed, but the door was locked, and all was silent. I hoped he was asleep, and went down to the breakfast-room, and there I found Mr. Higgins and Perrott.

Mr. Higgins was walking up and down the room with hasty steps, and with an air of discomposure such as I had never seen in him before.

A large heap of parchment, and a quantity of string and brown paper, were tossed in confusion on the breakfast table.

"See there!" cried he, with a loud voice, pointing to the heap of deeds. "See there, the insulting scoundrel! There! there are the settlements! There is the surrender of Mount Sorel, which I, fool and idiot that I was, had been about to sign! There lie the testi-
ls of my childish imbecility, of my preposterous

concessions to another man's ridiculous pride! There they lie, sent back without the condescension of a line —or a message! Thrown insolently in my face! Unsigned they are—unexecuted, thank Heaven! and so," with a tremendous oath, "so they shall remain!"

"Right," muttered Perrott, between his teeth: "ten thousand times right: the tyrant! Let him learn that all men are not created to pander to his insolent arrogance!"

"Where is Reginald?" pursued Mr. Higgins, turning almost sharply to me. "Where is that sick baby? Where is he? Why does he not come down? Why does he not appear and face things like a man, not sit whining like a dying rabbit in his hole? Fetch him, Edmund; fetch him, and let us see if he has any of the man in him! See if he has spirit enough in him to warm a dead sparrow! See if he can resent and feel for an insulted father!"

"His door is locked, he is not stirring yet."

"Stir him up, then! Let us see the wry faces he'll be making, because he has a *man* for his father! A man who never did, and who never will take the lie from any body!"

"The lie, Sir! who gave you the lie?"

"I say *he—he* gave me the lie!" cried Mr. Higgins, passionately. "He gave me the *lie*, and had his hair been no grayer than mine own, I'd have taught him what it is to give an honest man the lie! I'd have knocked him down, Sir! Ay, that I would! Ay, proud as he is in his own house. I told him so to his face, and I'm ready to tell him so again! Oh, I

care not the snuff of a candle for his paltry pretensions, for his fine aristocratical blood—not I! I told him to consider himself as knocked down, and I am ready to tell him so again!"

He was still speaking, or rather vociferating, when suddenly the door opened, and Reginald entered. How battered, how defaced was that once gay and joyous countenance and form. His eyes were blood-shot, his hair dishevelled, his face pale, his knees knocking together.

"Oh! there you are. There you are, at last!" cried Mr. Higgins. "Come forward like a man, Sir! Come forward and tell me how it came to pass, that while your father was insulted and the lie given him to his face,—his son stood by, like a craven coward, silent and passive, leaving it to honest Perrott there, to maintain and resent his quarrel! Come here, honest Perrott; they may say what they will of thee, here's my hand, and here's my heart! Thou'rt a rough one, but thou'rt a true one. Thou'rt not the man to stand cowering and crouching while the man thou lovest is basely insulted! Thou'rt the man to turn thy back upon, and to defy the world, in the cause of honour and justice! Leave the son to himself: he has found a better father! Ay, ay, go to thy new high-bred father! Wait till in his haughty arrogance he gives *thee* the lie, which he is ready to do, take my word for it, the first time thou darest to say thy soul's thine own!"

"Father! I heard no one give you the lie. Father! you know well that I am ready at any mo-

ment to shed my life's blood to defend your honour. But do not insult me, do not insult your only son by weighing his truth and affection against the mean flattery of a foul-mouthed hypocrite. Sir!" turning suddenly round and going up authoritatively to Perrott, "what have you been daring to say to my father, to set him against his only son. Do you understand well, and once for all, what you are about? Do you understand that I'll clip those rascally ears of yours, if you *dare* to interfere between my father and me?"

You should have seen the sneaking, terrified, malignant look of Perrott.

"There, Sir! Look at that table, Sir!" cried Mr. Higgins in a still louder voice, too much excited to regard what was going on between his son and Perrott. "There! There's the return of all your most delicate endeavours to gratify the refined aspirations of a De Vere! and wheedle a fine estate out of one father, in order to give it to another! Look at them, Sir! There are all your fine settlements and conveyances thrown in your fair face! Flung back at your head wrapped in a few sheets of filthy brown paper as if you had been a dog! And what better treatment than a dog does he deserve who can crouch beneath the lash, and, like a whipped hound, meanly lick the feet of an arrogant master? Thank your stars, Sir, that the conveyances are not signed, and that you are liberated from this accursed and debasing yoke for ever!"

Reginald grew red, then pale: but he said nothing. He lifted up the parchments, glanced at them, and laid them down upon the table with a sigh.

"Do you mean to take this as tamely as you have taken all the rest—puppy!" cried Mr. Higgins, growing more and more violent.

Reginald now looked steadily into his father's face; he was not to be awed by violence; it was a part of his sweet and generous temper to forbear and to forgive much; but when he once took his stand, there was a spice of the father's obstinacy in him. There he planted himself, firm and inflexible as a rock.

"Father!" said Reginald, looking at him, "listen to me. What have I done to deserve these reproaches?"

"Done! did you not stand by, to hear your father insulted to his face? Done! the rascal gave me the lie; and you did not trample him to atoms. Forsooth! not you! no business of yours to interfere."

"When I see both parties equally in the wrong," said Reginald, steadily, "I think it better not to interfere. I trusted that as the whole business arose from equal injustice on both sides, both parties, when they came to cool, would have equally regretted what had passed, and been equally ready, with proper and candid concessions this morning, to efface the remembrance of it. I am mistaken, it seems."

"You dare to say *I* was in the wrong! Listen to him! hear him! hear him, Perrott! A Daniel come to judgment! Mark him! a learned judge! Equally in the wrong, forsooth! most righteous arbiter! Hear him! hear him, Perrott!"

"Such arbitration as I should have expected from one of views so *moderate*, as Mr. Reginald," sneered the serpent.

"Well, Sir! right or wrong, listen to me. You think I'm wrong—I think I'm right: it very little matters to me what you think. Perhaps, you'll think it very wrong what I am about to do now." Seizing the papers vehemently, tearing off the seals, and rending the parchments with a loud report in two. "There, Sir! throw your cursed papers into the fire; and from this moment to the end of time, let me never hear one word more upon this business."

"Mr. Higgins, you cannot, you will not," interposed I. "You will take more time .... you will be calm .... you will suffer yourself to cool."

"Ay, like iron," said he, bitterly; and, turning upon his heel, "I've done—I've said my say. Here, Perrott! Come away, man!" and putting his arm under that gentleman's, they left the room together.

Reginald stood perfectly still for a few moments; he did not move—I think he scarcely breathed. Then quietly he approached the table, gathered together the fragments of the cancelled deeds, wrapped them carefully in the brown paper, tied the string exactly and firmly; and, taking the bundle under his arm, left the room.

His father and he met no more that day.

At dinner he did not appear, but he might be heard walking up and down his room. His father, who was evidently visited by some relentings of nature, sent up to ask whether he would not come down; he returned for answer, that he thanked him, but did not want any dinner.

We had a most uncomfortable meal. Mr. Higgins in vain endeavoured to appear in his usual spirits; he

was evidently uneasy, and out of humour with himself. Perrott was engaged, as it seemed to me, in endeavouring to soothe and pacify his patron, who every now and then turned suddenly round upon him, and gave him an impatient lash, which his good friend endured with the resignation of a martyr.

We sat some time after dinner: longer than usual, for it was not the fashion at Mount Sorel to indulge in dwelling over wine: but this day, none of us seemed inclined to stir. I, for one, was resolved to watch my opportunity, and to remonstrate with Mr. Higgins as soon as I could find him without that everlasting Perrott at his elbow. The citizen, on the contrary, seemed resolved to maintain his ground, and to give me no opportunity of speaking with Mr. Higgins alone.

We sat watching each other like two dogs at bay, ready to spring at one another's throats at the first motion we made. I began to see well enough what the game of this disinterested friend of the human race was, and I was resolved, if possible, to thwart him.

So we sat some wearisome hours. Mr. Higgins at the top of the table, his chair turned on one side, resting his arm on the table, his knees crossed, his foot swinging up and down, in the attitude of one lost in thought: Perrott picking at the fruit, and sipping his tea-spoonful of wine: and I, sulkily thrown back in my chair, watching them both.

The silence was interrupted by the man-servant announcing tea, upon which we all three rose at once, and adjourned to the drawing-room.

Reginald was not there.

"What does Reginald mean, Edmund?" said Mr. Higgins, turning to me with a manner which showed him entirely recovered from the excitement of the morning. "What does he mean, sulking in this way like a spoiled child? Tell him I don't like to see my son indulging in babyish perverseness."

"Reginald is not a man to indulge in any babyish perverseness," said I; "but he is miserable, and the miserable can ill brook even the most indulgent companions."

"I dare say: but don't begin to insinuate your preachments to me, Edmund. You know I never liked such things, and now I can't and won't try to bear them. Such as I am, your friend Reginald must make up his mind to take me. We did not make ourselves. I was, perhaps, hard with him this morning; let him think no more about it. I was provoked at what I thought the cool way he took things; but that is all over now, let us meet the good friends we have till now been."

"Then I hope and trust," said I, earnestly, "you will suffer yourself to be persuaded."

"To recall what I said, and revoke what I did this morning? No, no, Edmund! Don't let him flatter himself: he knows me pretty well by this time. I'm not an ill-natured, though a rough one; but what I do is done, what I say is said. After the insult I received last night—an insult I *never* will forgive—any thing like connexion between Holnicote and Mount Sorel, is out of the question. Let your friend take his choice. Any thing that calls itself De Vere,

I never will see: he must content himself. The man who calls De Vere father, shall never pollute my ears by applying that title to me. Let him do as he pleases. Let us, if he likes it, be henceforth as strangers. If he choose it, so be it. As for Mount Sorel, about which so much fuss has been made, my right hand shall rot in its socket before ever I convey it to a De Vere."

I would have remonstrated.

"Enough, enough," he said, resolutely. "What I have said, that I can do. Let him take his choice: let him go to Holnicote: but from the moment he crosses that threshold, he is lost to me, and I will *never* see him more."

He was turning on his heel, but he stopped and added, "It will be better you should tell him this, Edmund, than that I should. Don't mince the matter, it will be neither wise nor kind. You both of you know me by this time; if he chooses to forget the father that reared him . . ." here his voice slightly trembled, "to forget him for another, be it so; if not, let him show his face like a man, and let us think no more of what is past."

Think no more of what is past! How easy to prescribe it to one whose life and all its best affections were by this time bound up with all that past! How easy to utter the irreversible decree which severs another from all he loves and cherishes! How easy is it for the old, who have forgotten, to pass upon youth the irrevocable sentence!

I drew back mortified and disappointed. I saw that

Mr. Higgins had taken his determination. It was too late, he had been left in the hands of the jesuitical intriguer too many hours. He had taken his resolution before we had even had an opportunity of attempting to soften and mollify him. He had hardened, as he said, like iron, and it was vain to attempt to bend him.

This was just his temper. Good-natured and facile till offended, but then implacable and immovable. I knew how it would be; he would never trouble himself much upon the subject of Mr. de Vere again. He would never forgive him, and he would adhere to his determination. Mr. de Vere and he should henceforth be strangers; and as long as the earth rolled in her sphere, so long—could his power have lasted so long—should Mr. de Vere be excluded from Mount Sorel.

While the above conversation had passed, Perrott, with his back turned towards us, pretended to be examining a picture. When Mr. Higgins, having left me, took a chair at the tea-table, Perrott turned round, placed himself on the other side, and, drawing a paper from his pocket, began to discuss business connected with the societies, with as much coolness as if nothing had happened. Mr. Higgins made tea, as was his custom, poured it out, and the two politicians seemed to have forgotten that any other interests existed in the world.

I stood for some time fixed to the spot where the conversation had taken place. At last I went up to Mr. Higgins, and said,

"Do you really intend that I should convey this message to your son? At least let me wait: time may lead you in some degree to modify your declarations?"

"Eternity would not," was his answer, just lifting up his head; "the sooner you put him into possession of the truth, the better," and he resumed his conversation with Perrott.

I went up to Reginald's room.

When I opened the door, he was sitting writing at a small table; he lifted up his head as I entered. Never did I see a man so changed. These few hours seemed to have done the work of years. He did not give me time to speak, but began:

"I have been hoping to see you, Edmund. I could not trust myself down stairs. I should be sorry to meet my father again, till I am a little more master of myself. I might forget what was due to him..... I have been writing to *her*. To be without any news of her, this," putting his hand to his head, "this I think it is that keeps all so confused here."

I went hot and cold as he said this, and remembered the faint shriek I had heard; but I would not for the universe have added to his uneasiness. I was silent, and he went on.

"I cannot, ignorant as I am of Mr. de Vere's and of my father's intentions, present myself at present at Holnicote. After what passed last night, it is impossible. Edmund, you are the best fellow in the world," in something of the coaxing tone of other and happier times; "do this for me. Walk over to Holnicote, take this letter, see my Clarice, bring me word

how she is. Learn what Mr. de Vere's intentions are. I must be acquainted with them before I proceed further with my father. Will you go, dear, generous fellow? Will you carry my letter?"

"Willingly, Reginald; I will do any thing in the world for you. But first I have a message from your father. Shall I deliver it now?"

"You may spare yourself the pain, Edmund; he said enough this morning. He was in a passion then, but I know him well; his resolutions may be taken in passion, but it is all one, by them he will abide. He is slow at taking offence; but offence once taken, he neither forgets nor forgives. I must choose between my father and my love."

"So it is."

"Then I choose my *love*. He has been a good and affectionate father to me, and my feelings of duty and affection he cannot deprive me of. He may banish me, if he will; I shall always respect him and honour him, with all his faults. But I have won her heart; he gave me his consent to attempt that dear achievement; he has no right now to withdraw it. I am not going to shipwreck her happiness, whatever may become of my own. If Mr. de Vere can forget what is past, I will do my uttermost to make his daughter happy."

"But Mount Sorel?"

"Perrott may have Mount Sorel, as he fully intends to have, I see. When he has succeeded in this, he may perhaps allow my father to reconcile himself to me. Mount Sorel might have been the cause that

brought me and Clarice together; but it is too late even for Mount Sorel to part us now."

"Well, then," said I, excessively relieved and cheered by this determination, "shall I walk over to-night?"

"Do, my dear fellow."

"And what shall I say to your father?"

"The simple truth. I shall not go down to-night, because, such being my determination, I do not know whether he will wish to see me again. I wait his pleasure in that respect with submission."

I took my hat and went away.

I have told you how completely, in the storm and passion of the preceding evening, my heart had seemed to be purified, as if by a miracle, from all that was selfish and base in the love I cherished for Clarice. The cure was sudden, you may think; but such sudden changes of feeling in affairs of love are not seldom produced by the shock of great and unexpected vicissitudes. I felt, as I have said, the full force of the blessed influence. Scales seemed to drop from my eyes: I became a new and emancipated man: and I was henceforth able to devote myself, as I did devote myself, to these two delightful, yet unfortunate young creatures.

Happy, at least, in this, to have been able so early, in the very spring-tide of life and passion, to attain to that blessed and disinterested love for the happiness of others which waits upon, and hallows old age!

I walked rapidly down the green path, and plunged into the woods.

CHAPTER XIV.

Thy maiden faith, thy purpose fair and white,
As thy pure self—cross planets did deny;
And heaven did untie,
Faster than vows could bind.

HENRY KING.

IT must have been about seven o'clock in the evening, that I opened the gate, entered the terrace, and glanced down the well-known garden-front of Holnicote; that garden-front which, with all its grotesque and dark peaks and windows, had ever been so dear to me. I looked along the line of windows that used in winter to sparkle with cheerful light, and that in summer were ever open, and some one or other, the petted dogs at least, to be seen passing in or out. Quiet as were the family habits, to me it had always presented an aspect of tranquil cheerfulness; but now, as I looked down the terrace, all seemed changed. Every window was shut; the glass door closed. No one to be seen, nothing to be heard: it looked ominous, mournful, and a chill fell upon my heart as I gazed.

It was, as I have said, the latter end of August; the

sun was now approaching the horizon, and from beneath a dark cloud his parting beams fell upon the flower-garden and shrubberies, and glittered upon the many-paned windows, glancing like diamonds; but nothing could dispel the melancholy which the unusual silence inspired.

I walked down the terrace. Surpassingly beautiful the terraces, the urns, the flights of steps, the fountains, the shrubberies looked, under the deep orange tint of that glorious sky; but all was still as the grave.

I laid my hand upon the lock of the garden door; it yielded, and I entered the hall. All still as death. The blue drawing-room door stood open: no one was within. The embroidery frame of Clarice remained exactly as I had seen it the evening before; her many-coloured silks, rosy and blue, were lying in confusion upon the little sofa she was accustomed to occupy; the chairs and tables seemed to stand just as I had seen them then, but not a creature was to be seen.

I went into the front hall. I could find no one. I passed down the gallery which led to Mr. de Vere's room; knocked softly at the door; no one answered.

I ventured to open the door; every thing stood as usual, but Mr. de Vere was not there.

I went to the foot of the great staircase; I ventured to go up; I came to the sitting-room, I used during my illness to call mine. I paused for a moment—there was a sound of stifled lamentation within.

I knocked, and the door was opened by Mrs. Fermor.

Her face was deadly pale; but a ray of pleasure shot into it at seeing me. "You, Edmund!" she said, and

turned round as if to interrogate by her looks, some one within.

Then, after a moment's hesitation, she opened the door, and I entered.

Mrs. de Vere, her eyes filled with tears, was sitting upon the sofa, holding the hand, white as death, of my Clarice.

Clarice was sitting by her mother's side, wrapped in a long white garment, her hair streaming over her shoulders. She was uttering a low, incoherent, moaning sound.

"My child!" said the mother, "my child, look up! Here is Edmund!"

She shook her head mournfully, but turned it away, as if she would not look at me.

"Go up to her," said Mrs. Fermor; "speak to her, Edmund; speak to her of Reginald; rouse her—say any thing that can make her cry."

I went up to her and took her hand.

"Clarice," I said, "look at me."

She raised her sweet dark eyes, once so gay and expressive, but their speculation seemed gone. She gazed full in my face with a wild glazed stare; but her features moved not, they seemed as marble; and her eyes remained fixed upon mine, more like the eyes of one who has ceased to breathe than as those of a living spirit.

"My dear Clarice," I said, commanding myself with incredible effort, "I have a letter for you," and I held it out before her.

She raised her hands eagerly, and her whole countenance working with a sort of childish impatience,

she endeavoured to seize hold of it; but her frame shook and her hands trembled so violently it was impossible for her to take it. Those poor, white, trembling hands fidgetted with the papers, then uttering a heavy sigh she let them fall powerless on her lap, drooped her head, and seemed again relapsing into motionless stupidity.

The poor mother's tears again streamed in torrents down her cheeks; Mrs. Fermor, kneeling down before her and taking the shaking hands in both hers, endeavoured to compose her; but she continued to tremble from head to foot as if in an ague, her poor head working from side to side, and her eyes rolling vacantly as if in utter confusion of thought. Then she seemed suddenly to recover recollection. She clasped her hands convulsively together, lifted them up, bent her head upon them, and uttered a wail, so piteous!

"Clarice, Clarice!" cried her mother, "don't—don't cry so, you will break your poor mother's heart."

"Poor mother!" said she at this, turning round, and stroking her face with a sort of childish fondness. "Poor mamma! What am I doing? Don't cry, mamma," wiping her mother's eyes with her steeped handkerchief. "Don't cry, mamma," Then turning her head mournfully from side to side, "What is all this crying about? Ah! I know! Ah! I remember now!".. clenching her two small hands and pressing them desperately against her forehead as she started up wildly. "Ah! I know! I know! I know now! He is gone—gone—gone: and I never—never—never—never—am to see him more. Oh!"

A few seconds she stood, fixed as a statue of despair;

then nature at last gave way; her clenched hands relaxed, she spread them before her face, sank upon the sofa, and tears fast and warm trickled through her fingers.

We silently watched her weep. After about a quarter of an hour, Mrs. Fermor took one hand which had fallen upon her lap, and pressed it gently; upon this she uncovered her eyes, and looking at her, said softly,

"Do I make you very unhappy, dear Mrs. Fermor?"

"Alas! my loved Clarice, you make us all unhappy. Your poor mother. Take patience, my Clarice, do not break your mother's heart."

"Ah, my mother! Don't cry then," turning fondly to her. "I am going to be very patient, you shall see I will be very patient. Good Edmund too, are you sorry for me, Edmund? What is that you have in your hand? A letter? Give it me."

She could hold it now, and I put it into her hand.

She held it up before her eyes.

"I can't see it—I can't read it," said she, piteously. "I can't see the letters." She persevered a little while and then said less sadly, "Never mind, it will do my poor heart good—it will warm my death-cold heart:" and she put it into her bosom. "But why did he insult my father, Edmund?"

"Insult your father! how could you think so for one moment? He did no such thing, my love, he never intended or thought of such a thing, he loves you far too dearly not to love and honour all that belong to you. This is all a horrible mistake."

"My father turned him out of his house—he did—

yes, Edmund, he turned my lover—my husband—he turned him out of his house. It was a bad night to do it in, wasn't it? What was I saying?" and her head began again to turn from side to side, and her ideas to wander. "What was it, mother? What was it, Mrs. Fermor? What was it that crushed this poor little heart?" straining her two hands over it. "What was it? Was it a loud peal of thunder that split this poor brain? What was it? I can't remember at all."

"Don't mind it, love; don't try to remember it. Yes, it was the thunder, love. Lay your head upon your poor mother's breast, Clarice.... Your poor heart is not broken; lie still, my darling. All shall be well," said the poor mother, soothingly, and endeavouring to lay the poor child's head upon her bosom.

But no: she shook it mournfully and said,

"I can't keep it still—I don't know—I've forgotten. It was a dreadful thunder."

We looked mournfully at each other, while she, her countenance relapsing into vacancy, began to play idly with her fingers.

The loud debate in the dining-room had reached the ears of the three trembling women in the saloon. Often had Clarice crept into the gallery and listened, pale and breathless with terror, as the sounds of the violent contention reached her between the intervals of the pealing thunder. She had come back to her mother's side; she had sat trembling; while Mrs. Fermor, filled with anxiety, and almost as pale as herself, stood

holding the door of the saloon half open; her ear bent forward, catching the terrible sound of the rising voices.

At last they heard the door of the dining-room burst violently open; hasty footsteps were crossing the front hall; and the loud bang of the heavy house-door seeming to shake every window in the mansion.

Breathless with anxiety, her heart beating wildly, pale, shivering with the anticipation of evil, she stood —but not long. The hasty stride of her father's foot was heard rapidly approaching—too well they knew that footstep of ungoverned passion—he pushed the door open, his face pale with rage, and going up to Mrs. de Vere, he said,

"I did well, madam, to forget the ancient maxims of my house and to descend to communication with a set of gross plebeians. I did well to sully the fair name I bear, by consorting with a set of rascally Jacobins. I did well in proposing to sacrifice the pure daughter of an unspotted line to visions unworthy of the wildest romance, and to considerations of interest that have disgraced me in my own eyes for ever. I did well, and I have met with my deservings. Child, that your father lives, thank his proud indignant heart that refused to burst under the insults of the vile: or rather thank these poor scanty gray hairs—this blood that has chilled within my veins. Ralph de Vere is become a poor, worn-out old man; but could he live —despicable as he has become—ten thousand ages, never should the insults of this night be forgotten.

"Think no more," advancing sternly towards her, "think no more of such unhallowed associations! Let us

have done with this incongruous, this accursed connexion. Marry thyself to thy grave—if marry thou must; but by Heaven thou hast looked thy last at the son of that accursed Higgins!"

She did not speak or move: she stood, her large eyes distended, looking at him.

"Do you hear!" he said, with increasing fury. "I have commanded him this instant to quit the house! If he chooses to obey, well—if not, let him be kicked out! Hallo! Who's there?.... Maurice! Thomas!...."

"No—no—no—Good Heaven of Heavens! No—no—no—no," wildly darting forward. "Hear how it thunders! Hear how it rains! He shan't go! I will hide! I will shelter him! He shan't go. Reginald!—here! to thy Clarice!!!"

She was tossing her arms wildly; she was rushing forward, her white garments floating behind her; she was desperate—her senses were forsaking her. Mrs. Fermor caught her dress as she sprang forward.

She struggled; she tore at her dress; she shrieked aloud; it was that shriek that I had heard. Then there was another loud bang at the house-door as it closed behind us. She tossed her arms wildly over her head, uttered a loud cry, and sank senseless upon the floor.

"Carry her to bed!" said the offended father; "carry her to bed, Mrs. Fermor. This is an exhibition of passion that I little expected from my daughter. Madam," turning to Mrs. de Vere, "accompany your daughter. Let her know the high displeasure with which I regard such unfeminine bursts of violence.... Take her away, let me not see her again till she is more reasonable....:

You have little cause, ladies, either of you, to be proud of your pupil."

It was, indeed, a burst of passion for which they were all unprepared. It was the outbreak of the hoarded sorrow of years—so tenderly anxious as she had been about her father; so solitary and sad as had been her short life; so much exhausted as she had lately been with her tender cares about the sick-bed of her mother—all concealed under an air of cheerful alacrity out of the most generous regard for the happiness of her parents; and every effort and sacrifice sweetened and brightened by her love for Reginald! All these long repressed feelings at once found way, as the sudden destruction of all her happiness fell upon her like the thunder-bolt; and her poor head and heart, as she said, seemed to shiver under the blow.

They raised her from the floor. Her bodily powers had already in some degree returned. She opened her eyes, but gazed stupidly about, and began shaking in every limb as with palsy.

So she had remained since, visited with fitful intervals of recollection and reason: then, as if overpowered by sudden remembrances, screaming and raving, till she sank exhausted into a state of stupidity. So she had remained the twenty-four hours, in which they had unremittingly watched her.

They had sent for no advice. How could they expose this sweet child in her ecstacy of misery, to the eyes of a stranger? They watched her, and wept. What else could they do?

Even would the stern father have relented, and of this

there was little hope, it was too late. With rude disregard to the feelings of others, the result of the uncontrollable rage with which he was filled, the proud man, writhing under the agonies of his outraged and insulted feelings, had torn asunder, without a moment for preparation, ties, which it may truly be said were twisted round her heart strings. The fair edifice was shattered at once by the blow, and heart and intellect were left a heap of ruins.

As she sat thus before us, playing with one or two tresses of her fair hair which had fallen over her shoulder, twisting and untwisting it among her fingers in a manner that seemed almost entirely bereft of reason or purpose, Mrs. Fermor, giving a sign with her eye to the weeping mother, motioned me to a chair near her sofa, and I sat down. She then in a whisper asked me, what had passed at Mount Sorel, and where was my friend? our poor Clarice quite unheeding what passed between us. I told her of the alternative which his father had set before Reginald, and of the resolution he had taken.

"Then let her know it," said she. "Whatever is the result, this, at least, will afford her consolation: perhaps, may restore her to herself.... Speak of it to me, Edmund; name your friend; speak aloud; it may perhaps awaken attention, and arouse her, at least, from this awful vacuity."

"And so, as you were telling us, what said Reginald in answer to Mr. Higgins?" she began.

"He said," I repeated it slowly, and distinctly; "he

said this, these were his words: 'Then I adhere to my *love;* and while I live and she lives, I never will forsake her.'"

She moved her head, she assumed the attitude of one listening; a fitful ray of reason seemed once more to visit her eyes; a calmness, an air almost of beatitude, began slowly to diffuse itself over her features.

"What Reginald said, was this:" I again repeated, deliberately, and distinctly. "'Then I adhere to my *love;* and while I have life, and she has life, I never will forsake her.' That letter was intended to assure her of this."

She said nothing, but fumbled for the letter, and got it out of her bosom.

She looked at it wistfully.

"But I can't read it," said she.

"Let it be, my dearest," said her mother; "you will be able to read it presently."

She sighed, and replaced it in her bosom.

Then Mrs. Fermor began to say, gently,

"Your friend Reginald will be made very unhappy, I fear, when he learns the sad state in which you have found our darling Clarice."

"It will make him *miserable*," said I, emphatically.

She looked at me anxiously and attentively, and then seemed to make an effort to collect her thoughts.

"Miserable! What were you saying, Edmund? That it will make Reginald miserable! What will make him miserable?"

"Your misery, sweetest Clarice, Ah! dearest Cla-

rice, compose yourself. Let me carry him comfortable news. Let me tell him that you are better."

"That you will have patience. That you will wait and hope for better times," added Mrs. Fermor.

"That you will still be my own Clarice," said her mother, fondly embracing her.

"Hope!" said she, wistfully; "but what is to become of my father's dreadful oath? Hope!" looking into my eyes scrutinisingly. "Can you speak of hope to me, Edmund?"

"Hope every thing," said I, as cheerfully as I could. "Hope every thing from your mutual truth and constancy. Let me take back to Reginald the assurance of your fidelity; of your adherence to engagements far too sacred to be now lightly broken."

She looked wistfully at her mother.

"May I say so much, mamma?" hesitating. "May I say.....?"

"Say what you will, my child. Say any thing that it will comfort you to say," said her mother.

She kneeled suddenly down, and, still with a countenance too much excited, though mistress once more of her sorrow, she lifted her eyes, bright with a holy enthusiasm, to heaven, and clasping her hands, said fervently,

"Then, if I may, hear me before the most sacred Heaven repeat aloud that vow, which has long been registered in my inmost heart. Living or dying—in this world or the next—I am his. For him was I created —for him I am ready to die. They may part us bodily, but we are one. Nor life, nor death, nor things on

earth, nor things below the earth, shall ever sever my soul from thee, my only lord, and love, and husband! So help me Heaven."

She rose up with an air calmed and serious, and sitting down again upon the sofa, took her mother's hand, and reverently kissed it. Then she kissed Mrs. Fermor, and turning to me, said, speaking once more in that sweet low tone natural to her,

"You will carry this back to Reginald, will you not, my dear Edmund? I cannot read his letter now, tell him, for my eyes are very dark and uncertain; but it is not a parting letter. I know that now. It lies upon my heart, and I shall go to sleep. Tell my dear Reginald to go to sleep too.... Edmund!" looking affectionately at me; "Edmund! Excellent Edmund!" and before I could prevent her, she was on her knees again, had snatched my hand and kissed it too. She then rose, and said, turning to her mother, stooping down, and kissing her forehead,

"Dearest mother, I am afraid I have been very ill. I do not know how it has been with me. I seem to have had a dismal long dream. How weary and pale you look, dearest mamma! Will you go and lie down? Shall I put you to bed?"

"No, my darling," said her mother, "go you to bed, and go to sleep, my Clarice, and then I will go to bed and sleep too."

"Come, my love," said Mrs. Fermor, gently urging her. "Let your old governess put you to bed for once again, and shut your eyes like a good, obedient little

girl, as you used to do when she bade you, and we shall all be better in the morning."

She put her arm within hers, and drew her gently away.

Clarice looked at me once more.

"Farewell, Edmund! Remember—farewell!"

And she suffered herself to be led out of the room.

I sat down, resolved to wait a short time in order to be able to assure Reginald that this frightful seizure was at an end.

Mrs. de Vere remained sitting and musing in silence, in the place she had occupied.

After, however, about a quarter of an hour, she looked at me, rose without speaking, and signing to me to follow, crossed the room, and approaching a door which led to another chamber, threw it wide open.

There was a pretty large apartment within, and what did I see?

The whole room was hung with beautiful preparations for the approaching wedding.

Beautiful dresses, wreaths of flowers, delicate coloured silks, and all those unimaginable pretty things that form that labyrinth of mystery to us, a lady's toilet, were hung in a sort of fanciful drapery round the walls, and over the chairs. On the bed lay a dress of lace and white satin, a long veil, and some orange flowers.

"We had been showing her all our preparations yesterday morning, for the first time," said her mother, mournfully. "My child! the wreaths that should have adorned thy bridal bed, shall they now deck thy grave?"

"Hope better things, dear madam," I said.

She lifted up her passive and patient countenance.

"No, Edmund," she said, "I am a still, but not quite an undiscerning observer. I know Mr. de Vere. As well may you attempt to melt a rock. His honour has been wounded, and all is said; even could Mr. Higgins be persuaded to make an apology, it would not be received. Men will not believe in the force of love in young hearts. He will demand, he will extort a sacrifice, of the extent of which he will not form the most distant conception. I have the gift of foresight," said she, with a sad smile; "but there is another and a better world."

And she cast up her eyes with that patient submission which she had learned to oppose to her many sorrows.

I could only press her hand reverently to my lips, and withdraw, which I did immediately; and having learned from Nurse that all was quiet in the chamber of her young lady, I slipped down stairs, took my hat, and went out by the garden door, most anxious now to avoid meeting Mr. de Vere.

I have told you before that all my evil passions had, as by enchantment, forsaken my heart, driven out by the sincerest pity and sympathy. Had it not been so, the scene I had just witnessed would have been sufficient to disenchant me: the force of that passion which united Clarice to her Reginald, had been betrayed in all its truth, and I question whether the persuasion

that the heart of the woman we love is entirely and inevitably given to another, be not enough to change the nature of the most ardent feelings. Love such as mine, composed as it was, of all the tenderness of childish attachment and the vehemence of youthful passion, seemed restored to the tranquil disinterestedness of early years. I doated still; fondly doated; but it was in another, and I trust in a more generous way.

I walked in musing mood homewards through the wood. The evening was warm and still, and nature was bathed in the dewy sleep of a fine summer night. The tranquil influence of the hour composed my spirits. I walked slowly forward, and passed through the winding thickets of the holly, beech, and hazel, turning by that path which somewhat abruptly, at length, led towards the broad pebbly stream, now glittering and reflecting ten thousand moonbeams, and intersected by the dark, shadowy, wooden bridge that crossed it.

I was aware of a dark figure leaning upon the rails of the bridge. I came up, the man raised his head, it was Mr. de Vere.

We both started, and stood for a second or two, looking at one another in silence.

At last Mr. de Vere said,

"Edmund! I do not see why I should feel myself obliged to include you in the general enmity. You have done nothing to disoblige, offend, or insult me," and he offered me his hand.

I felt surprised at this offer, and, I confess, reluctant at that moment to accept it.

"Nay, nay," said he, perceiving I hesitated; "let it be as you please, Sir," and he was moving forward to leave the bridge and pass me.

But I stood in the little narrow path, and interrupted his way. I stood there; and an irresistible desire came across me to endeavour, if possible, to act the part of mediator, and to plead the cause of reason and feeling with this inflexible man; to try what I could do by an appeal to the father; by an appeal to generosity, tenderness, justice, and that sympathy with the happiness of others, which, glowing as it did at the moment in my own breast, I fondly hoped to find responsive in that of another.

"Mr. de Vere," I said, respectfully, yet firmly, "I am a very, very young man—an inexperienced, unformed being: to speak to you, to attempt to reason with you, must appear presumption in the extreme: yet allow me . . . . permit me. . . . ."

"I know perfectly well what you are about to say, Edmund," he replied, with more patience than might have been expected. "And every thing you are about to say, I have already been saying to myself. I was exasperated last night by the insults," here his blood flew to his temples, "by the insults of that vulgarity and violence, to an association with which I had been weak enough to expose myself. I was, I confess, exasperated beyond the limits of patience, and I lost for a short time that self-command which no man should suffer to be wrested from him, even for a moment. Then I levelled myself with the

canaille," with a gnash of the teeth, "by which I was surrounded."

"But if you are candid enough to confess that you went too far, Sir; if....."

"Went too far! What do you mean to insinuate, Edmund? Went too far! No; if I had trampled the rascals under my feet, it would have been only what they richly deserved! Too far! I hope you did not think I regretted any thing that escaped me towards *them!* I do not know what I may have said, I have not attached sufficient importance to what passed even to recall it. It was of my daughter, I was thinking. It was on the subject of my daughter, Edmund, that you, privileged by our long friendship, I thought were about to speak.... I do regret that I exposed myself to my daughter; by an appearance of excitement which she ought to believe it impossible that scoundrels he holds so cheap, should excite in her father.... That was what I regretted: but it was the weakness of a moment."

"Then may I not hope, Sir... that a sentence too hastily passed, may be rescinded; that those who have not in the slightest degree given you cause for offence... that your own innocent daughter, for instance.... that her happiness may not be sacrificed to....."

"I should be sorry, Edmund, I should indeed be ashamed of my daughter, if I thought her happiness were really dependent upon any man. And I confess there is, in my humble opinion, a disregard for her dignity in appeals of this nature. I have already

signified as much to her mother; and I beg I may never hear a word more upon this subject, Edmund."

"But Reginald, Sir, what has he done?"

"He has the misfortune to be son to such a father. One is sorry for the poor young man, he cannot help himself; and, for the son of such a father, he is, I own, very unexceptionable.... but I am sick of the whole business. From such associations I have learned by experience nothing but degradation and dishonour are to be anticipated. Who shall touch pitch and be undefiled? I have so high an opinion of Clarice that I believe I consult her best happiness, and what will soon prove to be her real sentiments, by interfering with decision to rescue her from associations irreconcilable with all our habits."

"But Mount Sorel!"

"Mount Sorel!" and his eyes sparkled. "Do you think *that* shall bribe me to a compromise with my honour, Sir!.. Dear is that abode of my ancestors! too dear it has been to me; but rather let every memory of this ancient house perish, than perpetuate it at the expense of honour. No; rather let the once renowned name of De Vere descend unsullied to the grave, and expire, if so it must be, with its last and most unfortunate possessor."

He turned away his face for a moment.

"Ah, Sir!" said I, melted and softened in spite of all, "yet consider, consider where true honour lies. Are not these after all but illusions; beautiful, noble, it is true; but happiness, Sir, the happiness of others...two innocent young hearts."

"Edmund," he said, gravely, "where there is no

sacrifice, there can be little honour. Honour never yet was cheaply achieved. No De Vere has ever yet been found, who did nor prefer honour and dignity to happiness. It has been the maxim of our unhappy house. In such sentiments I was bred and reared; in such sentiments I hope to die."

I hung my head in silence a short time.

Then, with a sigh, I made the last appeal of the vanquished.

"Then all is over! and the happiness of two excellent beings is lost for ever!" I said, mournfully.

"I will hope not," said Mr. de Vere, with more gentleness than I could have expected. "Youth sees these matters in an exaggerated point of view. A little time, a little patience, and we shall, I trust, see them restored to tranquillity; and they will both, I hope, surrounded by connexions mutually more suitable, find happiness which could never have been anticipated from this monstrous arrangement. This much I will tell you, Edmund, in consideration of the kind interest you take in your young friends. I have not formed my resolution hastily, I have spent this solitary day in calmly reviewing the circumstances of the case. I have been awakened to the perception, how much my judgment had been influenced by a weak and childish desire to repossess Mount Sorel; how much by that weakness I might be blinded even in matters of the dearest interest. I thank Heaven that I have been aroused in time to a more rational view of things. The resolution so intemperately declared last night, is now become the fixed result of calm and well-weighed reflection. The family

of Mount Sorel is already apprised of this; and, through Mrs. de Vere, I have taken care to put an end to all irritating suspense on the part of my daughter.

"Not a word more, Edmund," seeing I was about to speak, "do not let us mutually irritate each other by vain struggles against the inevitable. Do not let the friendship I have ever felt for you, be another of the enormous sacrifices made in this unhappy business."

He made as if he *would* now pass me. I gave way in silence, and stood up against the thicket, as he calmly and deliberately walked away, taking the path which led to his house.

CHAPTER XV.

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments.

SHAKSPEARE.

THIS, then, was all the consolation I had to carry to Reginald. I had hardly the heart to go up-stairs and seek him in his room; but go I must.

I came into the back hall, panting with emotion, and the effort to keep it down; and, most anxious to avoid the encounter in my present humour, with either Mr. Higgins or Perrott, I stole up the back-stairs. I got safely along the gallery, knocked at his door, and was instantly admitted into his room.

He had been pacing up and down ever since my departure, expecting me with impatience. "Come in, Edmund," he said, "I thought you were never coming back again."

I came in and sat down.

"You look tired and dead beat, Edmund: you have nothing good to tell me. I see how it is," stooping down, and looking into my face, "you may as well say it at once. She has given me up. She is a good child

—the father is inexorable, and the daughter is dutiful. She has sent me a kind message, no doubt; she will try to be happy, and bids me to be so too... You need not tell me, Edmund; I know the phrases well enough in which these sort of things are set. But you were allowed to see her, I suppose."

"Yes, I saw her."

"Well—can't you tell me what she said. You didn't give her my letter, I suppose."

"Oh yes, I did."

"And did she condescend to read it?"

"Ah, Reginald!" said I, sighing, "you are far wide. Poor thing! you should have seen her look at it with her poor glazed eyes, and say plaintively, 'I can't see to read it.'"

"Couldn't see to read it? What do you mean?"

"They were too sudden with her, Reginald. Prepare yourself. It would have been better if she could have yielded in submission to her father; but she loves you, Reginald, she loves you tenderly and truly. When I first came in, she was not in the full possession of her sweet senses."

"For me!" he cried, clasping his hands to his forehead, and turning hastily away. "Oh, my angel!"

"I found her," said I, "between her mother and Mrs. Fermor," and I then, as well as I could, described to him how I had found her and what had passed. My narration was long: it was interrupted by his groans, his cries, his passionate exclamations, his demand of fresh particulars, and detailed descriptions.

But the result of my narrative was far other than

what I had anticipated by the recital; instead of the anguish I had expected to create, he was elevated, as the relation proceeded, to a state little short of rapture. I was so ignorant of human nature I could scarcely conceal my astonishment. I was not aware that there is a selfishness in the tenderest lovers, to which such professions of attachment and faith could not but be rapturous. When I had done, he stood musing for some time; then suddenly sitting down, he seized my hand, shook it warmly, and said,

"You are my own Edmund! you are my idol! you are my model of all that is excellent, true, and good, in man! You will take your place at our fireside—you are mine and I am yours, for ever. You are the dearest, best, truest, most incomparable of fellows, and friends. I ever have loved and honoured you, most unparalleled of Edmunds, and now I worship you!"

"Dear Reginald, what a rhapsody is this."

"I am so happy!" he cried, casting up his eyes, "ah, how happy!" and then in a cheerful voice he continued. "And so I am going to wash my face and take bread, as did the honest patriarch of old. I know there are neither iron fetters, nor stone walls, nor bars of brass, that can separate two good, loving, virtuous, hearts—two poor young creatures that love as we do. She is an angel! she's the perfection of truth and tenderness; and I will win her! Oh, you need not shake your head: faith moves mountains. I don't see my way quite at this moment, I know that; but it will come. Nature and love don't after all knit up hearts in this way together, to break them. That's stuff for

novels—the real world is an honester creature, it does *not* fail those who don't fail themselves. Come, man, let us wash and get some supper and sleep, and rise like giants refreshed, and on the morrow, we'll see what's to be done."

And rising he rang his bell, filled his large washing-basin full of water, plunged and replunged his head in the delicious coldness, arranged his hair, settled his dress, and was our handsome, brilliant, Reginald again, almost as sanguine and cheering as ever.

I could not share in these anticipations; I had not that cheerful confidence in the working of things in general, which possessed that happy spirit. I sat down with little appetite to the supper his servant brought, and which Reginald devoured with a hunger little in accordance, as some might think, with his situation: but let such know, that true anxiety and sincere feeling is often a very hungry thing; and that those who fall to, at a good dinner, after a hurry of the spirits, have often just as much sensibility, and only a little more bodily strength, than those who, like me, are sick and indisposed for days after a great excitement. I must add what I afterwards learned, that it was the good understanding which the late events had restored between himself and his old friend Edmund, which very much increased, nay completed, my honest Reginald's satisfaction.

Early in the morning, Reginald, arisen with the lark, was by my bedside. I found that the cheerfulness of the preceding evening had not been abated by any melancholy reflections during the night. After the agitation of spirit, to him so unusual, he had slum-

bered like a child; while I had passed a nervous, sleepless night, of melancholy fitful dreams, or feverish wakeful wanderings.

I was asleep when he came in, and he had taken care not to awaken me. When I opened my eyes, there he was standing, looking very impatient to begin; but good as a little child he was—he would not waken me because I looked weary.

"Well, at last you do open your heavy eyes, Mr. Edmund. Do you know you have been in such a deep, provoking sleep? The fiend said jog; but jog I would not, for I know you. While I have slept in Elysium, you have been tossing and tumbling. See where thy pillow lies! We don't thrust our heads in this fashion, against the wall to sleep, man!"

I sighed, and lifted up my heavy head.

"What do you mean by being here at this time in the morning, Reginald?" said I, striking my repeater, "it's only six o'clock."

"Oh! I am all alive with plans and schemes; and one cannot rest when he is blest with such a fertile brain as mine. However, the first thing I want to ask you is, where that little, fat, rosy, Welsh nurse of hers is to be met with? I want to hear, first and foremost, how the sweetest of Heaven's creatures passed the night."

"And what then?"

"Oh, then!.... Well, now, shall I go and lick the dust before the feet of Mr. de Vere? I don't care: as the honest Frenchman said, *toutes sortes de bassesses*, I am ready to commit. I don't care one millionth part

of a straw what I do. According to my creed no submission can be despicable in love; especially to my fair one's father. Why, when she!.... Oh, Edmund! am not I then a happy rascal? when she so sweetly cares about it, do you think I'll stick at any thing for *her?* I'd rather meet the bear and the lion it is true, like good King David, than ko-too to the great man, who I do think did not behave handsomely to my father after all: but they must settle their matters for themselves. My *devoir* is plain, that's one good thing. She's put her happiness, sweetest of earthly darlings, into my hands, and see if I won't take care of it."

"How you run on, Reginald," said I, half laughing. "What's the use of your going to Mr. de Vere; it will only make matters worse."

"Dearest of friends, it is most true, your eloquence did fail. The waves of your oratory beat in vain against that rock of his pride and obstinacy; but, therefore, think you that *all* must fail? Oh, Edmund!" suddenly changing his tone to one of deep feeling, "there is a passion that is stronger than death and deeper than the grave; and heart of man is not made to resist it. I will speak for myself. I ought to sue for myself. I will open my whole heart before him, and he *shall* yield."

"But if he should not—then...."

"Why, if he is absolutely and doggedly and stupidly and pig-headedly insensible, then I will treat him like a dog and a pig and an ass as he will prove himself to be, and run away with his daughter before his face."

"Ah Reginald! that will be no such easy matter. I

hope and I fear that she would never, never consent to such...."

"I have right, reason, and conscience on my side, Edmund, and she is right, reason, and goodness itself. She will listen to me sooner or later. I don't say now, and I don't say when; but sooner or later, if it must come to this, be sure it will come to this. There is a limit to the authority of parents, they have no right to play fast and loose with their children's hearts. He gave me hers, and he can't, and he shan't take it away again... or, he shall show better reason why, than that my father chooses to think that great blundering booby Brissot a great statesman.

"He says," continued he, after a pause, "that he doesn't care for Mount Sorel; and that's very well, we shall none of us have Mount Sorel; Perrott will take care of that. While the cats are squabbling the monkey runs away with the cheese. Poetical justice, Edmund! Men must go into absurd passions, and see what they get. I shall preach upon this text in the nursery to my children. However, while I prate time flies. How shall I enter into communication with the garrison? How shall I get at little Nurse. I don't mean to compromise the dignity of my bright and shining angel, by bribing servants and flattering chambermaids, and all that low, second-rate comedy way of proceeding. No, my blessed love, thy honour is as my own. I will guard that, as I will shield every thing belonging to thee, with all the skill it is given to thy poor thoughtless Reginald to use."

"Reginald," said I, fixing my eyes upon him, I

am sure they were full of the honest admiration I felt. "How did you come by such a right, such a delicate, yet such a straightforward, energetic way of looking at things? I think the best person and the only person you can with propriety apply to, is Mrs. Fermor; she is an independent agent; no menial, but a friend of the family. She loves you both tenderly; and she has so sound a judgment that she will point out to all of us the just limits within which we ought to confine ourselves, so as to avoid, what above all things I dread for your sweet Clarice, future self-reproach or blame."

"*My* Clarice!" and he stretched out his hand, seized mine and pressed it for an instant to his heart, looking at me for an instant with so much feeling! It was the first time I had ever been able to persuade myself to call her so.

Then he went on gaily.

"Mrs. Fermor! excellently advised! Dear, little, stiff Mrs. Fermor; she shall be Love's airy messenger; she shall, like a winged Mercury or many-coloured Iris, carry on the etherial correspondences. Quite right—good little female prig. But will she, think ye? Will not some crabbed old puritanical notions rise up between me and my pleadings? Will she be compliant? Will she budge?"

"She will do all that can be done consistently with right and duty. We ought none of us to wish more."

"Well, well, we may have different ideas of these things, that's all. But, for the first step, she's my man. But how am I to get to her diminutive ear?"

"Send some one up to the house with a note, and

beg her to step down to the wooden bridge, and speak to you; this commits no one."

"Well!" cried he, clapping his hand upon his forehead, "for a fellow just beginning an intrigue, I am the greatest fool in existence. That it should never have occurred to my ecstatical brain to do such a plain, straightforward, easy thing as this. Heaven help me for a poor innocent! Heaven, as the vulgar opine, and they are always right, does protect the innocents. Under this denomination I may thrive: under any other...! Well I do chatter like a magpie this morning: but, Edmund, what you told me last night.... yet, am I not a brute to take it in this manner? But to be so loved!... So help me Heaven as I will return it, ten hundred thousand fold."

So saying, he was leaving the room, but I called him back, "You forget your own father. Do you still persist in the message I am charged with for him, and which I have not yet delivered?"

"I forget now altogether what I said; but it's no matter, he has cooled by this time, depend upon it. He'll never throw off the lad he loves because he's faithful, constant, and true: though there's no saying what that black Jacobin at his ear may do with him. However, if he asks for me tell him frankly where I am gone; tell him frankly that to give up my pretensions to Miss de Vere's hand, is not to be thought of. In any thing else he shall find me a loving, dutiful son as heart can desire; but if the continuance of his affection is to be purchased at the price of my constancy and honour, I must most unwillingly relinquish the

possession. But you'll see, Edmund. He'll be quite another man this morning."

It was now necessary to rise, and meet Mr. Higgins at breakfast.

Would it be as Reginald anticipated? would the violence of the preceding day have subsided? I doubted it; there was a something unrelenting in the temper of Mr. Higgins, which I had once or twice observed. He had said that he should harden as iron: would it not be too literally so?

Slowly and unwillingly I rose from my bed, as the clock struck seven, and prepared to meet him at his early breakfast. I was an hour dressing; at last, slowly and reluctantly I opened my door, and proceeded down stairs.

The breakfast-room door was shut: no loud and cheerful tones, as was wont, proceeded from within. I opened it, almost expecting to find it empty; but I was mistaken. Mr. Higgins and Perrott were there.

Perrott was buttering a piece of toast, Mr. Higgins had the teapot in his hand, and was pouring out the tea, as usual, but there was not a morsel of bread upon his plate. For the first time that I had ever seen him do so, he looked somewhat pale and anxious. He lifted his head as I entered the room; but his usual, cordial, joyous tone of voice was no longer heard, as he merely said,

"Good morning, Edmund."

"Good morning, Sir." And I shut the door, and took my seat at the table.

The father's eye glanced at the door, but I was alone; he looked disappointed.

He however did not choose to make the slightest inquiry; but pouring out the tea, handed a cup to Perrott, and one to me, deliberately poured out one for himself, sugared and creamed it to his taste, and drank it off.

Perrott appeared silently intent upon his breakfast; every now and then, glancing into, and reading a newspaper, which lay by his plate. Mr. Higgins, I observed, did not taste a morsel: he swallowed another cup of tea, then pushed away his cup and saucer, and taking a newspaper, fell back in his chair: he might be reading, the newspaper certainly completely hid his face, but I don't think that he was.

I was determined to be like a ghost. I would not speak till I was spoken to; and till demanded, Reginald's message should remain unsaid for me.

So I eat my breakfast as well as I could, and when I had done, rose as if to go.

On this, Mr. Higgins laid his newspaper upon the table, and looking me steadily in the face, said,

"One word is as good as ten thousand, Edmund. Is Reginald coming to breakfast or no?"

"One word is not as good as ten thousand, Mr. Higgins," said I steadily. "Reginald has taken his resolution; a resolution, I am sure....."

"He has taken his resolution, has he?" said Mr. Higgins, with sudden haughtiness. "I may guess what it is—or why he is not here. He has taken his resolution, has he? to abide by his father's enemy I conclude;

Very well. Not a word more, Edmund," as I was about to speak.

"Not a word more.... I said he must choose between us. Perhaps," and his voice grew a little husky, "perhaps I thought he loved his rough, honest father, better... but it's all over...." and he rose to leave the room.

"No, Mr. Higgins," cried I earnestly, "it is *not* all over. He abides by no enemy; he does love his father thoroughly, truly, warmly; but he thinks—and does he not think justly? that there is one other, to whom honour, duty, gratitude, love, have now bound him by indefeasible ties. He thinks....."

"Sir, he is in love. It is not the first time, nor will it be the last, that the world has been lost for love. A man in love is prepared for all sacrifices, I know: when he talks of duty and honour, he might think of me."

"Oh, Sir! he does think of you, believe...."

"In a strange fashion it seems. No, Sir," and repeating those hackneyed lines of Pope; lines, however, which will swell to the heart of any one who thinks himself in similar circumstances;

> "A generous friendship, no cold medium knows,
> Burns with one warmth, with one resentment glows;
> One must our unions, our resentments be,
> My friend must hate the man who injures me."

he was going away, but I stopped him again.

"Don't go, Mr. Higgins." I thought I saw all the melting of a father's heart in his voice and countenance.

"Don't give him up in this way: in every, but this

one thing, wherein his honour as well as his love is concerned, you will find him all obedience and affectionate duty."

Perrott looked up from his plate, and his black and evil eye was fixed upon his friend.

Mr Higgins stopped.

"I told you last night, Edmund, that he must choose between the alternatives. He has chosen, you say; and I have chosen. I have no longer a son.....Come along Perrott, we shall be too late for the coach." The noise of an approaching carriage was heard; the whisky was led to the door.

Perrott sprang up, hastily buttoned his great-coat, which I then first observed was already on, assisted his patron to put on his spencer, and, before I could recover from my astonishment, they had mounted the carriage. Mr. Higgins took the reins, gave a slight touch to the horse, and the animal trotted leisurely away.

No passion, no excitement, no hurry of feeling. Mr. Higgins, with nerves of iron, and a resolution of brass, stood firm in this supreme moment. Had there been any demonstration of heat or violence, one might have hoped; but he was cool. Bitterly disappointed, deeply grieved he was, for he loved his son; but his pride was of a nature the more uncompromising, that it was not often excited; his careless indifference to the shows and forms of life, prevented many sources of contradiction. With men in general, he had no trifles to contend for: but once offended, there was no remission.

As regarded his son—urged by the evil suggestions of Perrott, who knew well how to profit by his infirmities,

he had obstinately resolved to look upon the decision of Reginald with respect to Miss de Vere, as the touch-stone of his affection and duty towards himself. He refused to admit any other alternative, and was deeply wounded by what he considered a proof of his son's indifference and ingratitude ; as well as mortified at this concession, as he conceived it, to that pride and insolence of the De Veres which he had resolved to humble. He obstinately refused to listen to a word of explanation, which might have softened his wounded and disappointed feelings; and, severing at one blow the ties which bound him to the only being he loved upon earth, he departed with Perrott, his heart swelling with all the pride of injured feeling.

Alas ! like his rival on the other side of the stream, how much good and generous sentiment was here sacrificed to false views of honour and dignity. And, alas ! too, that with all the affection they bore their children, they had both been so little schooled or disciplined, so little taught to consider any one but themselves, that the happiness of two most unoffending and admirable beings, was sacrificed without the slightest feeling of remorse, or seeming consciousness of injustice or cruelty, to their monstrous and exaggerated enmity.

How many men thus pass through life, intent upon their own objects, and trampling down under their feet the satisfaction of others, without pity, without compunction, without even observation !...

I did not know however, till a servant entered, the extent of the present evil.

I remained standing at the window after the departure of the carriage. When the man came in to take away the breakfast, I asked whether he knew where his master and Mr. Perrott were gone.

He said he believed to London; as his master had ordered his portmanteau to be packed over night, and Mr. Perrott's trunk was gone.

"And when is he expected back?"

"Master didn't say."

In spite of his sanguine anticipations, Reginald had not sped much better than I had done.

After standing at the window some time, lost in thought, I went down to meet him.

He was coming up the bank that led from the boundary stream, looking weary and disappointed.

My first question was,

"Well, how is she?"

"She has slept during the night and is quite calm this morning, but very weak. She has not yet left her bed: they will not let me see her, Edmund: and what am I to do? Mr. de Vere has given orders that I shall not be admitted. He will return any letters I write, unopened. Edmund, without your friendship, I should be lost indeed."

"Well, come in and take some breakfast, and tell what has passed."

"Where's my father?"

"Oh! he and Perrott are gone out together, and

wont be back at present; so come into the breakfast-room, and tell me all as it happened."

Into the breakfast-room we went. I, who took upon myself to play the part of host, rang the bell, ordered some fresh tea, and we sat down; poor Reginald looking disconsolate enough; he was disappointed, and he was thoroughly exhausted. I made him some hot tea, and when the meal was over, and the servants departed,

"Now tell me, Reginald," I said, "what have you done, and who have you seen?"

"I have seen Mrs. Fermor," he said, "and that is all I have seen. I have done for myself, Edmund, and that is all I have done. We had much better have been a little less scrupulous, and had recourse to dear little Nurse. I shall be brought to the second-rate-comedy-methods in spite of myself."

But this was said with a very poor, faint smile.

"I am glad to see you have not quite lost your spirits however, Reginald," said I.

"To tell the truth, Edmund, I may as well laugh as cry;" and then, in a serious tone, he said, "I was fool and coxcomb enough almost to rejoice in the account you gave me of the scene of last night; it is so exquisitively delightful to be so loved. But, oh, Edmund! if..... No; I could almost wish she could have forgotten me. And yet *that* would be impossible. . . . But, oh! my dear fellow!"

I was excessively alarmed.

"What do you mean, Reginald? in pity tell me at once how she is!" I cried, turning very pale.

"Why, I don't know exactly *how* she is, Edmund, and that is what distresses me."

"Great Heaven!" I cried, "you don't mean to say that her senses are still....."

"No, Edmund, make yourself easy, at least so far. Mrs. Fermor solemnly assured me, that since your visit of last night she had been perfectly composed, perfectly herself so far .... but shall I tell you all, just as it happened?"

"Do, for Heaven's sake!"

"Well, you know I wrote a short note and directed it to Mrs. Fermor, and furnished with this, I set out and creeped along through the woods. I felt afraid of being seen by any living creature, from a sort of fear that something or other might arise to prevent my errand. At last I recollected that I must find some one to carry my message that I could depend upon, and I bethought myself of that little, old, withered sweeper that I found sweeping the dead leaves out of the chapel. .... Do you remember it, Edmund? That morning, and that chapel, which first put the idle romance into my head of restoring the De Veres to their place and to their own. I had not seen Clarice then, you know, and it was in a wild romantic humour, as I have said, that I set out with you that day to church. I was thinking a vast deal more of the father than of the daughter when I set out, Edmund; and if you will believe me, I have thought of the father very much ever since. There was something in that man's character and story, that interested me greatly. It does so still—in spite of all."

"You were ever a generous fellow, Reginald; we all know that."

He went on.

"If I were to tell you what I felt when I first saw her . . . . but we wont talk of that," said he, for I looked uneasy. With his usual delicacy, he turned away his head; he would not see the sudden flush that passed over my face. I turned my head away, too, but I was at last quite vanquished; all his generous solicitude upon my account, now for the first time seemed to strike me, in this hour of anxiety and sorrow, as it ought to do.

I slid my hand into his and wrung it, and then I said, "However this may end, Reginald, for one thing at least let *me* be thankful; that it has restored me to myself. Go on with your story; but do not look at me. If I am more agitated just now than perhaps I ought to be, believe it, no feeling unworthy of you, or of that sweet suffering creature, is the cause. Go on, dear Reginald."

He paused a moment as if to compose himself, and then began again.

"Where was I? Oh! I went up to the old chapel, Edmund, to seek for the poor fellow; you know it lay in my way. You cannot think how calmly beautiful that old chapel looked this morning. All the hanging greens quite loaded with dew, and the bright morning sun shining through that fine window, and falling upon those sleeping effigies of warriors and churchmen—all passed away like a dream, as our own fitful fever will sooner or later pass away. I have grown so fond of

that place since I connected *her* with it; and in some of my lover's fancies, I have pleased myself in a foolish way with thinking that *we*—that she, and I, and you, Edmund—should, when all was over, slumber together there. Now it seemed to me as if I saw her beautiful white corse, wrapped in its grave clothes, lying in her open coffin....do you remember that young girl's funeral in Italy, Edmund?...and you and I, brothers indeed then, were weeping over her. I thought, perhaps *now* that we should not all slumber side by side, when that long last sleep came. All the gay confidence with which I left you was gone before I got out of the chapel."

"You found your old messenger?"

"Yes, there he was, sweeping in that identical spot where I first saw him. It was odd. Was that the opening and the close of the story, Edmund?"

"Dear Reginald," said I, more and more anxious, as his thoughts took this melancholy turn, "do remember that I know nothing of what passed."

"I asked him whether he would come with me, and carry a letter for me to Holnicote. He looked up at me with his dull gray eyes, in a curious interrogating sort of manner; and then he put down his spade, put his coat hastily on, and said he was ready. Those sort of people know all that is going forward in families, and seem to divine one's very feelings. So we passed down the bank and through the copses, and over the bridge; and it was not till I had crossed it, and was fairly up half way on the other side, that I remembered my father's fearful denunciations, if ever I crossed that

barrier again. But it was done. The thought made me, however, feel sufficiently uncomfortable."

I fidgetted upon my chair—would he never come to the point?

"I am tiresome. Forgive me, Edmund; I don't know what makes me in such a prating, foolish humour to-day. I have a sort of pleasure in dawdling and dwelling upon these things. When we got to that thick holly and beech thicket, where there is a little turn in the path, and where there is a wooden bench—oh, Edmund!—I sat down there, and I told the old fellow to make what haste he could, and carry the note to the house; to go straight to the servants' hall, deliver it to the first servant he met, and to wait for no answer, but go straight home by the bridle way.

"I sat down upon that bench, Edmund—ah! the *first* time I had sat down there! But we have often sat there together since. We were so fond of that little walk which joined the two estates. She has sat there, planning so much happiness for every one; and most of all for her father. She so loved her father! I think it is her father's unkindness that is breaking her heart, Edmund.

"Well, I had not sat very long before I heard a little step pit-a-pat down the walk. I got up! it was, as I hoped, Mrs. Fermor. She looked very pale, very grave, very mournful. She held out her hand to me in silence, and we sat down together upon the bench."

Oh! what a sigh of impatience I did give.

"Have patience with me, Edmund. Let me, my

dear fellow, go on in my own way. What you want to know is coming at last."

"How is she?" I began.

"'Reginald,' said Mrs. Fermor, 'I have received your note, and I am committing, I fear, a breach of confidence; but I could not refuse this once to come. Did Edmund tell you what he witnessed last night?'

"'Ah, Mrs. Fermor, was it possible that I could have been so blest as to be the object of such an affection?'

"She looked at me with surprise.

"'Blest!' said she, shuddering slightly.

"'He told me that he left her more composed; that she had gone to bed; that my letter, the assurances of my constancy, had soothed her; that she would sleep—'

"'She did sleep—but ah, Mr. Vernon! you are, the best of you, egotists in love.'

"'You alarm me! do speak out for Heaven's sake! How is she this morning?'

"'I can hardly tell you; I can hardly tell myself. She is, thank Heaven, perfectly composed; the dreadful disorder of yesterday has altogether subsided; but she is so feeble she can hardly raise her head from her pillow, and her voice can scarcely be heard.'

"'Good Heavens! what do you mean? what is the matter?' I cried, dreadfully alarmed.

"'It was a shock so sudden, a rupture so violent: there was, I *must* say it, such an unkind indifference to the feelings of a heart, which to him, had ever been so dutiful and affectionate, that it quite overset her. Can

we wonder at it? The assurance of your constancy, the vow which her mother, in her great distress, sanctioned by her presence, soothed the desperation of her feelings; but she is at present quite exhausted. And then, the recollection of her father's violence and unkindness presses upon her heart. She loved him—she has been in the habit of yielding so implicitly to his wishes. I see she feels his conduct deeply. It has struck, Mr. Vernon: even you could not draw out that dagger.'

"I sighed heavily, then I said 'I *must* see her.'

"'That is impossible,' said she, with firmness.

"'Impossible! how! what do you mean? Has not her mother herself sanctioned a renewal of those vows which have passed between us; and can you, Mrs. Fermor, you, who used to be justice itself, assist in such a barbarous act of tyranny as that which separates us.'

"'On this condition alone,' said she, 'can I be allowed to remain with your Clarice. Last night, after Mrs. de Vere was gone to rest, Mr. de Vere sent for me. He told me that he had met Edmund in the wood; and that he had upon reflection suspected he came with a message from you: I confessed that he had done so. Had he brought a letter? he had. Had his daughter received that letter? yes. Had she read it? I did not spare his feelings, Mr. Vernon; I explained why that letter was still unread. He turned deadly pale as I spoke, and was silent a short time, then desired that it might immediately be brought to him—but *that* I ventured to say, I must refuse to undertake; to

deprive her of it now, would be to kill her at once, or far worse. He paused a little, and then said, that perhaps I was right, but bade me observe the evil consequences of indulgences of this nature in a matter—on which—'Observe, well, Mrs. Fermor,' these were his words, 'my mind is irrevocably decided. The sleep which you describe is the result of exhausted nature, and would in all probability by this time have taken place, even without the administration of that dangerous palliative, which Mrs. de Vere in her weakness has been tempted to allow. We have all indulged Clarice, till she has been rendered so weak and cowardly and unable to resist affliction, that her mind has given way at its first trial. A mortifying experience! However, my judgment in such affairs is decided. An irrevocable and final separation is the only remedy and the best kindness. From that moment time begins his inevitably healing process; the slightest communication with the young gentleman we wish her to forget, will retard this blessed result. I have, therefore, to *insist* that no communication whatsoever shall in future be carried on. May I depend upon your honour, madam,' said he, sternly, 'that you will refuse to be the medium of any such communication? If I can *not*, the sooner you and I are strangers the better.'

"'I know Mr. de Vere, Reginald; the rock is not more immovable when once his resolution is taken. I knew it would be vain for me to remonstrate, yet I hazarded a few words: but I was speedily interrupted: 'It is not my desire,' he said, haughtily, 'to have that which I think is due to myself canvassed and censured

by the members of my family. What Mrs. de Vere and your opinions may happen to be upon this subject, is a matter into which I do not wish to inquire, so long as they are not *expressed;* but I will not have my own resolution weakened by listening to vain remonstrance.'

"'This, Mr. Vernon, was the only sentence that held out the slightest ray of hope; there seemed to be in it something like a secret distrust of his own resolution; but that is all. 'If you wish to continue near your pupil,' he concluded by saying, 'understand, Mrs. Fermor, it is on this one indispensable condition.'

"'Let me understand the conditions, Sir,' I said, as calmly and as respectfully as I could. 'The task you impose upon me of acting against all my convictions, is difficult; but difficult as it is I am prepared to undertake it. It is not for me to presume to interfere in the regulation of Mr. de Vere's family. No; not even when I see the vessel perishing.... but I beg your pardon. So long as I am allowed to continue with Miss de Vere, so long you may rely upon my honour that I shall adhere to the conditions you may please to exact.' 'I believe it,' said he. 'My conditions are simply that you shall not in any manner whatsoever allow yourself to be made the medium of communication between Miss de Vere and young Vernon, and that you shall by every means in your power prevent her adopting any other medium of correspondence with him.' 'This is too much, Mr. de Vere,' I said. 'I will not take advantage of the situation in which you allow me to continue, to assist in any plan that is contrary to your

wishes; but I cannot undertake the office of a spy. I will rigorously and honourably abstain from any interference of this sort; but you must find others to watch your good and innocent daughter.' 'Good and innocent, are words that may cover much in affairs of this sort which I might consider neither as good nor innocent.' 'She has ever been a tender and dutiful daughter to you, Sir.' 'Yes! till with the infatuation of an idiot I suffered her heart to be bestowed in a manner that I ought to have foreseen would end in alienating her from me. How could I be so mad!' he cried, with much emotion, 'as to permit an attachment to one of views, sentiments, prejudices, associations, habits, so diametrically contrary to my own. Could I not foresee that sooner or later such a moment as this must arrive? That sooner or later a union so unnatural must be rent asunder. I may think myself happy that the fatal knot had not already been tied; *then* I should have lost her for ever."

"'You see, my dear Mr. Vernon,' said Mrs Fermor, after a little pause on concluding this sentence, 'what a strange confusion of feelings is here; the very strong attachment which Mr. de Vere really feels for his daughter makes him tenaciously jealous of those influences which might end in detaching her from him. He is selfish, but he is not absurd in apprehending this. Her new associations *must* inevitably have opened her eyes to something which would have tended to impair the extreme veneration our sweet Clarice has cherished for her father. Men are often aware of the faults in themselves which they will not attempt to cure; and the

secret conviction poisons their confidence in the affection of others. I had suspected a little of this sort of jealousy upon Mr. de Vere's part before this terrible explosion took place; I perceive now that it gives strength to his resolutions against you.'

"'But what said he next?' I asked.

"'Nothing more passed,' she replied, 'for I went away. I had given the pledge required; I was afraid still more might be exacted; that I might be forbidden to speak upon the subject to her, a promise I was most anxious not to give, as the tranquillity, the very preservation of her mind, may depend upon judiciously allowing a free course to her feelings. But, now, Mr. Vernon, we must understand each other. That which I have promised, I must and will most scrupulously perform. And, therefore, whatever my opinions upon this subject, however fervent my wishes, my hands are tied. I can do nothing; I cannot even communicate to your beloved Clarice the fact of our present interview having taken place, greatly as I know it would tend to console her, and when consolation is so earnestly wanted. I can bear no letter; I can carry no message; your bitterest enemy could not be more obdurate upon this subject than I must be; for there can be no parleying with good faith. The permission to remain with your Clarice, a permission on which, I will not disguise it from you, more than her life, her intellect, perhaps, depends, rests upon the promise I have given; that promise I shall most rigorously and literally keep. But another promise I will make to you; I will be steadily and perseveringly your advocate and friend

upon every occasion that may present itself to plead your cause; and, trust your darling treasure to my care: I will tend her, watch her, solace her, support her, with all the poor skill that it has pleased God to give me; and with a love and tenderness that can scarcely be exceeded by your own. This is all I can do.'

"I took her hand, I kissed it fervently, reverently.

"'Then one more favour may I ask before we part. Describe to me exactly how she looks; where she is; what she says; what she feels.'

"'She was, at the moment I left her,' this kind and excellent woman began, 'she was, when I left her, a quarter of an hour ago, just awakened from a deep and heavy slumber into which she sank last night; your letter was in her hand, and pressed against her heart; but she had not yet been able to read it. When she opened her eyes this morning, she looked at me with her own sweet feeling expression: there was melancholy in it, but all the dreadful disorder of last night had completely subsided: the security she feels in your faith and affection has restored her to composure. But she has received a deep wound in her tenderness. I can see how it is. So devotedly as she has loved her father; so many, perhaps unheeded, sacrifices as she has ever made to his comfort and consolation; the rude indifference to her dearest feelings which he manifested in the manner of this rupture, has wounded her deeply. It is a sore trial to a child so good and dutiful.'

"'But how am I to hear? . . . . What am I to do? Good Heavens! this uncertainty is more than can be endured!' I cried.

"She shook her head and smiled. Just a faint suspicion of a smile, Edmund. Who would have thought that dear little piece of precision could have done so much? Her smile, I think, meant to say, I never saw such a young piece of washed velvet in my life: don't you think it did, Edmund?

"'I must now leave you, Mr. Vernon,' she said, 'I shall think myself pledged to have no concealments with Mr. de Vere. I shall tell him of this visit. You must permit me to do this.'

"'I have not the least objection upon earth; but when you are telling him, tell him this at the same time, that I do not withdraw my pretensions to his daughter, and that I am resolved to persevere in spite of every discouragement.'

"And so we parted, and here I am. And what am I to do next, my dear fellow?"

I afterwards learned what I am going to relate.

Mrs. Fermor returned to Clarice's room. She found the poor young creature laying stretched upon her bed, her eyes fixed upon vacancy, the letter of Reginald still clasped to her heart. When Mrs. Fermor came in, she turned round and tried to lift her head from the pillow. This she was too weak to do, but she held out her hand, and said faintly, "You have seen him."

"My dearest Clarice," said Mrs. Fermor; "are you well enough to listen to a short explanation from me?"

"You have seen him?"

"I cannot answer your question, my love. I must first explain to you what has passed..."

"You *have* seen him?"

"... what has passed this morning."

"You *have* seen him?" fixing her eyes earnestly and intently upon her face.

"Alas! dearest Clarice, I must first explain what passed between your father and me this morning."

"Ah! my father," and turning away mournfully, she closed her eyes for a few moments.

"Can you bear to hear what I have to tell you now, my love?" said Mrs. Fermor, anxiously.

"Yes—yes," despondingly. "Tell me all *my* father says. Oh! he little understands the heart," pressing her small fingers, still holding the letter, upon her's. "He little knows! but it is no matter!" then raising her head, resting it upon her hand, and fixing her dark eyes upon Mrs. Fermor, "it is no matter. Tell me all, Mrs. Fermor."

"My dear, he is at present inexorable."

"Oh! I knew that. . . . . I know my father, at last."

"My dear, his pride has been wounded in the tenderest point. Every sentiment of his nature is aroused, all his faults and all his qualities."

"But *you* said, or Edmund said—somebody I heard say it, I am certain—that Reginald did nothing to offend him."

"Quite true, my dearest love."

"Then what is it to *us* what other people have pleased to do? Mr. Higgins is a rough man—what

then. Is our happiness nothing? Is the respect due to Reginald nothing? Are our hearts so worthless that they are to be trampled under foot without a thought, without a regard? What have *we* done, Mrs. Fermor?"

She was silent.

"He may as well endeavour to rend this frame in sunder and bid it live, as sever two so closely united! Mrs. Fermor, he bade us live for each other. Time was when a slight effort might have parted us—it is now too late."

"Alas! I see it but too truly," she said.

"You have seen him—I feel that you have," said she, with energy, for her eyes were beginning to sparkle, and the scarlet of mantling fever was colouring her pale cheeks and lips. "Tell me, for I must and will know all he said to you."

"My dear—be composed—be patient—be calm. I cannot tell you any thing, Clarice, till you are calm."

She lay down instantly.

"Now I am calm," said she, "what does Reginald say?"

"Your father...."

She shook her head impatiently.

"Your father last night...."

"What did Reginald say?"

"...after you had fallen asleep, called for me down stairs; it was but to repeat what we already know, except that he exacted as the condition on which alone he would allow me to remain with you, Clarice, that I should rigorously abstain from being the medium of

the slightest communication between you and Mr. Vernon."

"He did not—he could not," said she, almost indignantly.

"And, therefore, my love, my honour is pledged; and I cannot, without his permission, tell you one word of what passed between Reginald and me this morning?"

"Certainly not," said she, gloomily; "I will not ask you. But tell me, Mrs. Fermor, you who have been the mother of my mind, who have taught me to distinguish between duties and scruples—tell me how far outraged nature is to submit to injustice. Tell me where the natural authority of a parent finds limits; and where the resistance of a child ceases to be impious.

"He joined our hands," she continued, lifting up her eyes, solemnly; "he knit those bonds which God and nature have declared to be the strongest and holiest upon earth. It is true, the irrevocable words have not been uttered over us; but is that a reason why a union so perfect, a love so sincere, wanting but the last sacred name of husband and of wife, is to be annihilated, to be as if it had never been?.... Two innocent creatures rendered hopelessly and eternally wretched, and for what? what have *we* done? what has any one done?"

"My dear child, I have nothing to say," taking her hand, and speaking as calmly as she could. "I feel all the injustice, all the cruelty—shall I call it by its true name—of this proceeding. And yet, my love, he is your father; there are relations, there are sacred

duties . . . we can never rend the one, or fly in the face of the other, with impunity. The Almighty has appointed to you this father: he has likewise commanded that we should honour our parents, and veil their faults from our own as well as from other eyes."

She was silent and seemed musing for some time: then she said,

"And I did so love my father!" and her eyelids moistened a little.

"Have patience, then, with him; he may relent at last."

"Do you really and truthfully think so, Mrs. Fermor?" said she, looking steadily at her. "Do you think he will relent at last? Tell me the *truth*, I exact it. Do you think—have you seen the slightest symptoms of relenting in him?"

"I think I have, one *very* slight one."

"Then I shall know what to do," she said, somewhat coldly; and turning on her pillow, she took the letter, and opened it. The excitement of this conversation had roused her a little, and she was able to read it.

She read it once—she read it twice—she read it thrice—then she folded it, shut it again in her hand, and remained musing.

Presently she turned to Mrs. Fermor, and looking at her very gently and sweetly, she said, "My dear Mrs. Fermor, I spoke coldly to you just now. I felt irritated, almost vexed with you, for giving the promise you did: but I was wrong. Yet say, is it pos-

sible that my father would have taken you from me if you had not?"

"I fear so, indeed."

"Tyranny!" she muttered between her teeth.

"Again!" said Mrs. Fermor.

But she said nothing; the father was fast losing his hold upon the daughter's heart. Nor let her be blamed: the blame was his..... How dared he, to gratify his own proud resentment, thus trifle with the dearest and most sacred affections of another?

She had been the best, the tenderest, the most dutiful of children and of daughters; she had watched his uncertain humours and spirits with the most unvarying solicitude; she had borne with his humours with the most cheerful sweetness; she had sacrificed, without repining, all the innocent enjoyments of life to his melancholy ways and habits; she had loved, honoured, pitied, and understood him; and this was the ungrateful return. Now, when the whole happiness of her existence, when life, and what was far more worth than life, reason, was trembling in the balance; when the happiness of him she loved and honoured beyond words, was on the beam; he had weighed against it the indulgence of his own temper, his own long concealed aversions, his own bitter political prejudices, and the scale had turned against her.

She was gentle, affectionate, and good; but there was a deep earnestness in her character, and an obstinate rectitude of plain thinking that could not be blinded. No longer able to take council with Mrs. Fermor, nor

with her mother—for she saw instinctively that it would only expose Mrs. de Vere to much perplexity and suffering, without being of any real service in remedying her own scruples and uncertainties—she resolved to meet her difficulties unassisted; and to be guided, as best she might, by her own conscience and understanding.

The letter she had received from Reginald, had strengthened and consoled her; but she still felt so much dizziness of the brain, and difficulty in fixing her ideas, that she suffered that most awful of all human sufferings, the apprehension of losing the possession of one's reason. She had, however, been well matured by the cares of her admirable governess, and by the trials of her early life; and she was not one to be overwhelmed by difficulty. She determined to face the present with composure, and to preserve her own reason, and her lover's happiness. After a long and deep fit of musing, she said,

"My beloved Mrs. Fermor, I see the delicacy of your situation, and I lament that I cannot say all I wish to you; but I may at least discuss some things. My head is still very much unsettled: assist me, my dear friend, with those means which will best preserve to me my reason. As for the rest, Heaven and my own best reflections be my guide."

"You must keep yourself very still, my dear, for you are already over excited. Lie still, my Clarice, and let me get you some breakfast: you have tasted nothing for forty-eight hours."

She obeyed; and submitted in patience to that difficult and painful but most necessary task, of quieting the beating nerves and hurrying pulse by profound still-

ness.... She lay, but the letter was at her heart, and any thing was tolerable.

Presently Nurse appeared with her breakfast; I don't know why Mrs. de Vere sent Nurse, but perhaps you may guess. Clarice took some tea, and then she took Nurse's hand in hers, and looking into her eyes, said,

"My dear, good little Nurse; do you love your poor child well enough to do a thing for me, that I would not trust to any one in the world but you? Can you, dear little Nurse, hold your pleasant, prating tongue, and not say a word of what I am about to say to you; because, little Nurse, it would be a great dishonour and disgrace to me if you did."

"Pless your sweet face, my darling; and I'll do your biddings, and never say a 'word' on't—oh! not to sarve the principality wouldn't I."

"Well, then, Nurse; you must take a long walk for me. You must go over to Mount Sorel....but you must not go up to the door; you must not let the servants see you; because that wouldn't be maidenly or proper for me, you see, Nurse. But you must just peep and creep about till you see Mr. Edmund, or Mr. Reginald, and then, you must just say this: That I have been able to read the letter, and that it has done me much good; and that I will be better; and that we must all have patience; and all do the best we can. You must see Mr. Reginald, if you can, my pretty Nurse, and you must bring me word, how he looks, and what he says, you know, Nurse."

Nurse shook her head.

"Ah! it's a pity it wasn't that Edmund! If it had

been only for the name like—but it's all one, my pretty lamb. I'll just tidy away the breakfast, and make you comfortable; and you go to sleep a bit more; and when I come back, I warrant but there'll be news for you."

And Nurse saw us both; for while we were walking in the shrubberies, we saw something red glancing among the trees, like a peony amid its leaves; and we found Nurse sitting upon one of the benches.

"My dear Nurse, what brought you here?" I cried.

Reginald started forward, and seized both her hands: "You have news for me?" cried he.

"Indeed, but I have. An't she's read the letter, and it's done her goot. An't she's—oh! dear! I've forgot it all. And she's very impatience, and she prays you to be so, too."

"Oh! I promise her obedience," said Reginald, smiling; "and that's what she said, my pretty Nurse?"

"An't you must do all for the pest; and I'm sure, I wish peoples would put their pribbles in pen and ink, for I can't remember all your nasty sassenach. No—I can't at all."

"So I guess," said I; "but how is your young lady?"

"She's in her bet—but she's had a mouthful of tea, and that's the first morsel she has had, poor darling, since that thunder-storm."

"And she's quite herself?" asked I.

"Oh! isn't she! only she's as pale as a corse, except when she's as ret as a rose. Put she bade me see either Edmund or you, Mr. Reginald; but the rather you; and to tell her all you said and looked, and so on.

And I think you look very merry, and so I'll tell her."

"No—no—Nurse, let me tell her myself! You sit down here," offering her a guinea, "and I'll step in and write a little sassenach; she'll understand mine better than yours."

"Take your money away, Sir," said Nurse, putting aside the guinea. "I know what I'am doing well enough; carrying messages at the risk of my place. I wouldn't do it for fifty ginnies, but I'll do it night and day for her and you. Make haste with your letter, for I'm not a going to let your flunkies see that my young lady has any messages for young men."

"Quite right, Nurse," I said, "and if you'll go back to the style in the lane, and wait there, we'll bring the letter as soon as it is written."

And now a correspondence is fairly opened, and you will perhaps suppose that Reginald had little difficulty in persuading Clarice to the measure he had resolved upon, of at once rescuing her from parental injustice by carrying her off: a thing very easily done, and, under the circumstances of the case, as he perpetually urged to me, the only possible way of reconciling objections and difficulties. But I could never be persuaded to look upon such a step with patience. I dreaded lest my sweet Clarice, overborne by his entreaties and arguments, might be led to adopt a measure that I could not, even under these singular circumstances, contemplate without disgust.

But I might have spared myself all uneasiness upon that head. Clarice had formed her resolution, and she

adhered to it. There was much strength, much energy, much courage in her character; but so happily blended with maidenly delicacy, reserve, and gentleness, that never could my Clarice be persuaded to seek her own happiness, or that of one she loved far better than herself, at the expense of those sacred and holy reserves which enshrine a young and lovely woman with so many sweet and generous associations, and render her the mysterious idol of a young man's heart. No—she adhered to her resolution; she maintained her good faith; she consoled her lover by the repeated and continued assurance of it; but further she could not be persuaded to go. And even Reginald himself, urgent as he was, loved and honoured her the more for what he called her cruelty.

CHAPTER XVI.

Die Sittlichkeit umgiebt wie eine Mauer
Die zarte, leicht verletzliche Geschlecht.

GOETHE.

IN the meantime the two violent and misgoverned fathers were equally enduring the punishment of their own obduracy and obstinacy.

Mr. Higgins went to London, and at that period of excitement was speedily immersed in the culpable intrigues of the clique to which he belonged. He had always taken interest in the political opinions they advocated, both from the warmth and enthusiasm of his temper, and from a really sincere and benevolent interest in that progress which was to lead, as he fondly believed, to the ultimate perfectability of his race. Irritated against his son, stimulated by the insidious insinuations of Perrott, out of humour with himself for the first time in his life, he now plunged recklessly into measures and associations that certainly merited the name of conspiracies, and touched upon the limits of high treason.

It was among the mistaken precepts of the philosophy of

those days, to regard all family and domestic ties as only a somewhat generous form of selfishness. Men were taught to despise as narrow and false in the extreme, the old-fashioned maxim, that charity was to begin at home —that the circle thence beginning was to enlarge and expand till it comprehended earth and skies: other principles of benevolence were taught and practised. We were to love all mankind equally, and to despise the vulgar sentiment whence the charities of father, son, and brother, first began. That marriage was a monopoly, and the worst of monopolies, was gravely taught by one whom half of civilised society agreed to elevate to the rank of a philosopher. You may judge of the other doctrines thence deducible. Mr. Higgins was, as we have seen, a disciple of this school. He really loved his son as warmly as any father upon earth could do, and a great deal more warmly than fathers in general are used to do; but he suffered his brain to be filled with these empty notions, and Perrott understood very well how, in his present fit of anger against Reginald, to work them to the best account.

For Mr. Higgins really was very angry with his son. And one reason was, that he could not endure the thought of being superseded by Mr. de Vere in his affection; he was as jealous upon this point as a young lover, and like a young lover saw things in a most exaggerated manner. It was this feeling that made the idea so insupportable, that Reginald did not, as he thought, resent the insult he had received, with the spirit he expected. To do him justice, it was

wounded affection rather than pride, which made him implacable.

And how he deceived himself, or rather suffered himself to be deceived by the insidious Perrott! Reginald loved his father warmly as he had ever done; and the more he loved him, and the more painful was the rupture to his feelings, the more was he stimulated to make the sacrifice which he felt to be alike demanded by love and honour.

He wrote to his father to explain his feelings and his reasons; but what are letters when the serpent is at the ear?

In short, Perrott, as Reginald had anticipated, succeeded in his machinations, and Mount Sorel, after all its devious fortunes, was at last devoted to be pulled down, divided into marketable lots, and sold for the patriotic purposes of that society, of which Mr. Perrott was treasurer. This may sound incredible to the present generation, but it is no exaggeration of the extravagances of the times.

Reginald and I had still lingered there, Mr. Higgins taking no notice of us in any way; and we flattered ourselves with the hope, that as we heard no more from him, his resentment would gradually abate, the difficulties on his side clear away, and Mount Sorel, at least, remain in its original position. I should have explained that Reginald, in his first letter to his father, had concealed nothing; he had told him of all that he

had written, said, and done; and once more expressed, but with much temperance, and much affectionate submission of expression, what he thought his honour and duty demanded from him.

One short letter was all he received in answer.

"*Mr. Higgins to Reginald.*

"You have chosen your part, and your party. It is what I ought to have anticipated, and should if I had not been a fool. I never saw any thing good yet come of *moderantism*, and never shall. Plausible pretences will never go down with me in place of energetic enthusiasm. I hope you will be happy in the old coach, which I warn you will be speedily overturned; and that you will soon learn to like your new father, better than you ever did your old one.

"J. H."

In vain Reginald, in answer to this, poured out the genuine affection of his honest heart; it was plain that every thing he could say was misinterpreted by the malignant enemy who had now gained such dangerous influence.

Perrott hated Reginald with that deep, bilious, quiet, malignant hatred, which is the attribute of one whose mouth is filled with generous and benevolent sentiments that never visit or touch his heart—the attribute of that coldest and most marble-hearted of heaven's creatures, a thorough hypocrite.

And Mr. Higgins, high-spirited, clever, and discerning as he was—because he was wanting in that self-

discipline, self-examination, and sound principle of domestic justice, which almost every man I ever knew more or less wants—became the prey of this deep and unprincipled designer.

So matters went on; Reginald continued, by letter, his correspondence with Clarice; but he never could obtain from her the indulgence of that one meeting which he implored, and upon which he no doubt calculated as the means of persuading her to adopt his views. Nor was I allowed to visit at Holnicote. I rode over once or twice, but every one I inquired for was denied.

Once or twice indeed, in the midnoon of a moonless night, when all nature was sleeping in profound repose, Reginald and I had stolen up to Holnicote. She would not allow him to come alone; but once or twice in my presence had he been blessed with the music of that sweet voice, as, shrouded by her white floating curtains, and looking through the yellow ray of the lights within as some angelic vision, we had seen her; and in my presence she had renewed her faithful, innocent vows.

She looked shadowy, and almost as if she would dissolve into air, as she thus almost floated before our eyes; and her voice, low and soft as it ever was, sounded to me now hollow and broken; but she said she was well, and Reginald could not, and would not believe any thing else. I heard a cough, hard and sharp, as she retreated; but happily he never noticed that, which struck on me like the sudden passage of cold iron through my breast.

Thus we continued to linger away the summer and the winter at Mount Sorel; and hearing no more of

Mr. Higgins, began to hope that his anger was subsiding, and to expect every day to see him return home.

We were disappointed.

One day as we were taking a very late breakfast together, for our hours had become dawdling and irregular, we were surprised by a rattling hack-chaise driving up to the door. The driver pulled up his jaded horses, tumbled off his dicky, rang the bell, and we saw from the window a middle-aged, rather gentleman-like looking man get out. The breakfast room door was opened by the man-servant, who, announcing Mr. Worthington, ushered in to us a perfect stranger; who, taking his hat off and saluting us, announced himself as Mr. Higgins' man of business. He was a middle aged man, of slender frame; somewhat bowed in the chest, as are men who have been long accustomed to the desk; his countenance was remarkably gentle and placid; he was slightly bald, and the thin, pale hair fell scanty round his calm and delicate forehead; altogether, there was something that excited confidence in his quiet demeanour. I felt inclined to like him as soon as I cast my eyes upon him.

I had never seen him before, but I knew very well who he was. His name was always mentioned by Mr. Higgins with every mark of esteem and confidence; and the admirable manner in which Mr. Higgins' affairs were conducted, appeared fully to justify the high value he set upon his services.

"Pray be seated, Sir," said Reginald, offering him a chair; "have you breakfasted?"

"About three hours ago," said he, slightly smiling.

There was a pause of a few moments; he seemed to

open the business he came upon with reluctance; at last he began.

"Mr. Vernon, you are no doubt acquainted with the purport of my visit here. A very beautiful place this," said he, looking round; "and it seems, indeed, a pity...."

"What is a pity?" said Reginald, with some anxiety.

"Is it possible, Mr. Vernon, that you can be ignorant of the resolution that Mr. Higgins has announced to me, and, indeed, commissioned me to carry into execution!"

"What resolution? I am sorry to say I am totally in the dark with regard to all my father's present designs and resolutions."

"He has decided upon pulling down this house, selling the materials, cutting down the timber, and dividing the estate into small lots; in short, realising as much money upon his purchase as it can be made to produce."

Poor Reginald said nothing, but turned round to me with a countenance quite blank with dismay.

We had neither of us ever imagined, however we might have talked, that his father would literally carry his threat into execution; or that Perrott's preposterous designs upon his purse and property could be triumphant.

We looked at one another while Mr. Worthington sipped the tea I had poured out for him, and helped himself to some bread and butter.

After a short pause, perceiving we neither of us spoke, he lifted up his head and said:

"Am I to conclude that Mr. Vernon was a stranger to this resolution on the part of his father?"

"Perfectly," said Reginald; "and I confess the intel-

ligence has filled me with the most painful astonishment. This house to be pulled down ! the woods to be levelled! the estate partitioned! the very name annihilated! What can induce my father to take such a step? Want of money? Impossible!"

Mr. Worthington shook his head.

"It ought to have been impossible, Mr. Vernon; but the times in which we live are strange ones. No man can calculate upon what the morrow may produce, or reason from past events to future consequences. No man whom I have ever met in the course of my professional practice, appeared to me to have such sound views, to form such just estimates, to be so fortunate in all his plans and speculations as Mr. Higgins *used* to be. It is to be lamented, that he seems at present to have entangled himself in associations that are any thing but pleasant; perhaps, not altogether safe. There are plenty of sharks abroad, Mr. Vernon. Would it not be well if *you* were a little more in London?"

Reginald shook his head in his turn.

"Circumstances have not very long ago occurred," I began, "which unfortunately have rendered it impossible for my friend to appear uncalled for in his father's presence."

"I was afraid....I surmised from something that dropped from Mr. Higgins, when last I had the pleasure of an interview with him... Something seemed to weigh upon his mind, which he was struggling to conceal from me. And he gave his orders about the disposal of this estate with an asperity and air of mortification which was foreign to his usual manner. There was a very ill-

looking person, a man I understand of a very designing and dangerous character, with him when he called—one Perrott. I was very sorry to see Mr. Higgins in such company. But the man having ascertained—that being, I think, the purpose of his visit—what manner of man I was, never came with him again. Mr. Vernon, it really is a pity. Such an estate as this should not be so dismembered; believe me, Sir, these things are often deeply regretted after they have been done. The example of the rash destruction of ancient time-honoured systems, under the influence of a blind and passionate enthusiasm, hard by, should serve as warnings, not as incitements. Indeed, Mr. Vernon, pardon me for saying so, this will be repented of."

"It is no affair of mine, Sir, I assure you," said Reginald, bitterly; "I am a stranger and an alien to my father's heart and my father's counsels. The property is his, not mine; and every man has a right to do what he pleases with his own."

"Of that I am not quite sure," said Mr. Worthington; "a man who has children cannot be said to have a perfect right to do exactly what he pleases, even with that which is his own."

"Oh, children, Sir!" said Reginald. "Have you yet to learn that such ties are only regarded by the weakness of a blind prejudice; our country is our family, and the whole universal human race our children."

"I am sorry, Mr. Vernon," said the mild man of business, "to hear such principles from your lips."

"Oh! don't take them for my principles, Sir," said Reginald. "I love my father with all my heart, and

don't set up for a citizen of the world. That is, I would love him," he added, "if he would let me. But I can tell you, Sir, he's making it a hard task for any son."

"I am very sorry to hear it."

"I will not conceal from you, Sir; for you have long had my father's confidence, I know, and I have no wish to withhold mine; that I think the step he has resolved upon taking is, and is intended to be, a cruel outrage upon what he knows are my feelings. He knows how dear this place has been, and ever will be to me. He knows the strong ties that knit me, though till lately a stranger to every time-honoured stone and tree upon it. He knows, had he sent it into the market entire as he purchased it, that it might have been preserved for those who, at least, are very interesting to me. Edmund," turning to me, "could you have suspected this malice in my father?"

"It is not his," was all I could say. I was confounded with the intelligence.

"We must not call it malice," said Mr. Worthington, mildly; "we must not attribute motives of this sort, when others, and more obvious, and less irritating ones are to be found. Unquestionably, as far as the interests of his fortune are concerned, Mr. Higgins is taking the best method of disposing of this estate. Property so large, unless very favourably situated, seldom commands the price it might obtain divided into smaller portions. The mere trifle, comparatively speaking, which your father gave for it, is a proof of what I say. No, Mr. Vernon; do not imagine it to be mere wanton ill-

humour that dictates this measure. It is a very well-advised one, in a mere pecuniary point of view. But there are things worth more than mere money; and I doubt whether the possession of 15,000*l.* or 20,000*l.* more, will repay either you or your father, for the sacrifice of such a beautiful and time-honoured domain."

"*Me!*" said Reginald. "I despise *mere* money. We have enough of that, surely, between us; and if my father wants it, there is plenty of property that might be realised. No, Sir," said he, mournfully, "there is only one way in which it is to be understood. But I would fain hope, with Edmund, that the malignant intention is not altogether his own."

Mr. Worthington had by this time finished his tea, and he rose, and said, "I believe I must proceed to business. I will leave you, Mr. Vernon, to consider with this gentleman, who appears to be an intimate friend, whether any course can be hit upon to avert a consummation which seems so devoutly to be deprecated. I will, if you please, see you again before dinner, and be the bearer of any communication you may wish to make to your father."

And so this gentle, good, and somewhat stiff, confidential man of business rose up, and, taking his tablets in his hand, was going away.

"Of course you will dine with us," said Reginald.

"I must set out upon my return to town this evening; but I will accept your invitation. Something may suggest itself to us before we separate. Good morning for the present, Sir."

"Suggest itself! Suggest itself, Edmund!" cried

Reginald, flinging himself at full length upon the sofa, in an attitude of despair. "Pretty talking! No; I know him well. A mule is not more obstinate, when once he has taken the bridle into his mouth. So here ends my last hope," cried he, casting up his eyes. "Now there is not the slightest chance of ever mollifying her father; and, Heaven help her! without his blessing she never, never will consent to be mine. Well, it's all over: and I don't care what becomes of me. I wish there *would* be a civil war. I'd like to run my sword through the heart of that black Jacobin, who has ruined me irretrievably at last."

I could make no answer; I could say nothing to comfort him; his evil destiny had triumphed. It was plain, that with the possession of Mount Sorel, the last hope of engaging the pride or interest of Mr. de Vere in his favour was at an end. If Reginald Vernon, the heir of Mount Sorel, had been rejected so contemptuously, what had Reginald Vernon, with his own little estate in Northamptonshire, to urge?

"Write to your father once more: try what can be done: leave nothing unattempted," said I.

"To tell you the truth, Edmund, I am beginning not to like to write any more to my father. I'm afraid I shall end by feeling very much as this cursed new philosophy would have one. He's pushing me too far; I shall soon not care a snap of a finger for him, or his wishes, or his feelings. It's plain he's arrived at that point with respect to me. There are only two beings in the world worth living for—*she* and you, Edmund. And *she*, oh! she won't, and she can't do

wrong; and she will not fly in her father's face, even for me! And I am a fool, and I adore her for her scruples. So the best thing we can do is both to pack up for heaven as fast as we can together; for, as for being happy on earth, there's an end of it."

"Yet try," I urged.

"Well, I'll try," and he took a pen and scrawled away.

"Mr. Worthington is come, and is going on with the business you sent him about, and there will soon be an end of a thing in which you took pride and pleasure, and I took the greatest pride and pleasure; and all for what? Because your son is not a scoundrel, and won't desert the woman he loves, as long as she is true to him; and because fathers choose to play at football with their children's hearts, and worse, with their children's good faith and honour. Is this right, father? Is this just? Is this like yourself? Don't sell Mount Sorel. Don't take a mean and unworthy revenge either on me, or on *him*. Don't act as no gentleman on earth would act. At least, if you *will* part with it, offer him the refusal, like a gentleman.

"R. V."

Mr. Worthington having finished his business, and having dined with us, when nothing worth notice passed, was the bearer of this somewhat curious remonstrance to town. In a few days we had the answer, hastily scratched upon a piece of common paper, as if

written at the first moment, and with the first material which came to hand. It was dated from the Corresponding Society's rooms, in ——— Street.

"You have twice used the word *gentleman* in your letter. It's a term, you know, that I abjure and despise. Honest man's enough for me. I have a right to do what I please with what's my own, and I tell you plainly if the proud pauper *could* give me my price for it—which he can't—he should not have it. It may be very fine to forgive one's enemies, but I'm not quite a saint of that temper: and I'm not going to put an insolent aristocrat into a high place, that he may crow over me. I've got him down, and I'll keep him down, and I wish all his overbearing race were under my foot with him. And as for thee, I've a mind to give thee a lesson, lad, in human nature, and let you see what you'll be rated at by the old woman De Vere, or by the young lady his daughter, when Mount Sorel has gone to find bread and cheese for a set of honest patriots, who, while devoted to the service of mankind, are left by an ungrateful and corrupted country to starve. When thou'rt fairly tired of playing the supplicant at Holnicote, come to thy father, lad; he'll forgive thee, and we'll see whether we can't make something out of thee, after all. "J. H."

"He's right there," cried Reginald, as he flung down the letter upon the table. "But I know the lesson by rote—he need not be so fond to teach it me.

Much Mr. de Vere will give for Walter the penniless, I trow. No—I give it up—I'll tell her all—I'll take leave of her—and I'll go and fight for Toussaint, in St. Domingo."

"But, Reginald, you have already given up all hopes of Mount Sorel. You anticipated this long ago."

"Did I? Yes, I *said* so: but saying—oh! how different it is from being. And then, who ever dreamed of its being lotted, and carved, and cut up in this fashion? snipped and snapped—carved like an apple-pie! This beautiful, fine old place! the house of her fathers! the monuments of her family! I'm as mad as Mr. de Vere himself, I think, to care so much about it. But I cannot help it, Edmund."

That night was a dark, moonless, cold, March night. Time had passed over our heads, you perceive; and Reginald determined, in a sort of moody despair, to go and seek one other interview with Clarice. He would tell her the worst, he said; he would make one more effort to persuade her to dare all to be his, in spite of fate, and to share in the wretched, ineffable ecstacy, as he called it, which would result from defying their fathers, their own scruples, and the censures of the world, and seeking, in some distant country, that contentment which he well knew never would be theirs.

"We are doomed," he cried, "we are to be miserable. Let us, at least, be miserable together. Let us taste the feverish cup of joy, though it be mixed with poison. I care not—only let me call her mine. Once call her mine, and *then*—the Deluge!"

I would fain have endeavoured to persuade him to put off this visit for another night; to wait till he had time to compose himself; not to hurry her spirits by the character of his own; above all, not to endeavour, by the spectacle of his despair, to influence her to some rash step, "which, believe me, Reginald—for I know her well—she will never, never cease to regret, and which will poison her whole future existence."

"We shall have no future existence," he said, hurriedly. "I feel that. We can neither of us resist much longer. Let us be united, and let us die! and let them cover us and our unhappy story under the ruins of Mount Sorel together."

"You are terribly excited, Reginald—don't go. I cannot let you go. I will not go with you."

"Thank you for that—much better not!" cried he, eagerly snatching his hat; and, banging the door after him, he was gone in a moment.

I took mine, and followed him.

The wind was howling among the trees, and tossing the branches wildly to and fro—the dark clouds hurrying over a sky only illuminated by the faint and fitful stars. The house-dog at Mount Sorel baying hoarsely to the wind, added to the melancholy of that dark and cheerless night.

I walked with considerable speed; but Reginald must have flown; he had been under the well-known window long before I arrived; and I opened the gate of the terrace just in time to see two figures descending the steps of the garden—one dark—the other, her drapery flying behind her in the wind, as we paint an angel.

What had passed exactly I never could learn, so hurried and incoherent it all had been.

Reginald had made the well-known signal; the fair vision had gleamed upon him from the window; and he, no longer master of himself, cast, grovelling in despair, upon the earth, had told his tale, and confessed to agonies now no longer to be endured. Hope had vanished! "So farewell hope, and welcome fell despair." The long, weary anxieties of love may be endured, can be endured, as long as they are animated by hope; but, with the destruction of hope, patience ends; and a kind of desperation too often takes possession of the heart, wound up to the highest point of human bearing. It was thus with Reginald; his pleadings, his agonies, would have melted a heart of stone. What was their power over that angel of love and pity, now listening, pale with sorrow and dismay!

One only boon he conjured her to grant—one last satisfaction—so long as they had been parted. Let her, this one night, come down; let him, once more, clasp her to his heart; let him, in one fond and last embrace, include the tenderness of a life. Let her hear him once—once more—her hand in his—before he tore himself away, and ended agonies no longer to be endured.

The vehemence of his distress, the passionate accents of suffering, at length no longer repressed, melted her tender heart; she stole softly down stairs, undid the casement window of the parlour below, and was in his arms.

"My Clarice!"

"My Reginald!"

Smothered accents; streaming tears; whispered promises of faith and love — true, honourable, faithful, honest love: for such was his....

The first enthusiastic meeting over, he led her from the dangerous vicinity of the house windows, to sit, as they had often done in happier days, upon the lowest step of that first flight which led into the garden.

They were just going down, when I descried her white dress gleaming through the darkness. My heart felt a sudden chill. She had yielded then! She would elope with him.

"No," I cried to myself, "this must not be—no, my angel love! Thy pure glory of virgin reputation shall not, must not, thus be obscured! Some other—some better way must be found! I will save thee from this, at least!"

I hurried my steps, thinking to pursue them; but when I reached the top of the flight, there they were, sitting upon the last step. His arm was round her waist, and her head was resting upon his shoulder; it was uncovered, and her long tresses fell all over his arm. I stopped, they did not perceive me. He was speaking rapidly to her in a low, murmuring voice; and every now and then he stooped down and kissed her forehead.

She shook her head, I could see, mournfully, at what he said; but not as if she were relenting. Then he suddenly rose, and flung himself at her feet; she made a little cry, and started up, and half turning, saw me. She gave a faint shriek of terror, and fell—he caught her in his arms.

I hastily stept down to them.

"Forgive me, sweet Clarice," I said, as she looked at me with eyes of astonishment: "you have suffered me to be your guardian and your protector in these too agitating meetings. Forgive your too anxious Edmund's importunity. My love, why . . .?"

She disengaged herself from Reginald's arms, and, looking at me with that pure, innocent, unclouded, ingenuous eye and countenance of hers, said:

"Dear Edmund! he was so *very* wretched to-night .... he begged me so hard .... this once! this once! I could not refuse him that one, poor consolation; when I must, I must, my Reginald, refuse...."

"Yes, Clarice," said I steadily, "you must indeed."

"Take him away, Edmund," said she, piteously. "Don't let him be so very unhappy—who knows? Nay, Reginald," stooping down and kissing the hand that clasped hers, "do not, do not quite despair."

He looked at her gloomily—doubtfully—wistfully.

"Be mine," he said, in an inward tone.

"I cannot."

"Neither can I, then! This life is to be endured no longer! Come with me, Clarice! Defy these vain scruples. Am I not your husband? Come with me, Clarice."

"Don't ask me, Reginald."

"I tell you Mount Sorel is parcelled, and sold; I tell you the last link that bound me to your father is broken; I tell you there is no hope but in the assertion of our liberty; and that Heaven and nature alike prompt us, to dare, to be happy."

"No, Reginald," I interposed, "don't talk of happiness. There will be none for Clarice with you. I know her, and I defy even you to make her happy against the convictions of her own heart. Don't listen to him, Clarice." She looked so pitying, so relenting.

"He said but this very day, that he adored you for your very reserve."

Oh heart of woman! that argument was irresistible. To win his approbation she would have died.

"Take me back," she said, giving me her hand, "I have staid here too long."

He turned away gloomy and displeased.

She bent down, impressed a kiss upon his coat sleeve, then, led by my hand, which was still fast in hers, ascended the steps, passed hastily through the window, and shut herself in.

CHAPTER XVII.

No joy so great but runneth to an end;
No hap so hard but may in fine amend.
SOUTHWELL.

The next morning a note was brought to Reginald.

"Mr. de Vere presents his compliments to Mr. Vernon, and takes leave to say, that if the restraints of honour and propriety are not sufficient to confine Mr. Vernon's midnight walks within the precincts of Mount Sorel, Mr. de Vere will find himself under the painful necessity of carrying his family where they may, at least, be exempted from such questionable, undesirable visitations."

"I told you so," said Reginald. "I had a presentiment that last night was the last on which we should ever meet; the last opportunity that would ever present itself; and that, this suffered to escape, all was over for ever. I don't know why I felt this, but I was sure of it.... Very well, Edmund, if it had not been for you, I should have persuaded her, and we should both have been by this time happy. Had you good reasons, Sir?".... coming up to me, his eye suddenly kindling with jealous passion.

I could now lift up my head unblenching. I could meet his eye steadily. I had earned that recompense at least.

I looked up at him, then, and said:

"You cannot wrong yourself so much as to suspect *me*, Reginald?"

He was melted like a child: he fell upon my neck, and cried bitterly.

"I am too wretched," he sobbed.

Poor fellow! he was quite overcome at last.

The post came in, and with it came a letter from my father. I should have told you that he had been abroad all this time; he was dwelling in the remoter parts of Europe. My letters had reached him irregularly, and he had been but very lately apprised of what had taken place at Holnicote. He now wrote to say that he had landed at Dover, was returning home, and would visit Mount Sorel on his way. He did not seem to know that Mr. Higgins was not there.

At an earlier stage of this most unfortunate business, I felt that my father's interference might, perhaps, have been of the most essential service. Now we both knew that it was too late; the evil was too deep-rooted; it had endured too long a time to be eradicated even by his skilful hand. So we expected his arrival in a desponding mood enough.

He did not arrive till near dinner-time.

Reginald and I were lounging in the porch when his chaise drove up.

He jumped out, and shaking us both cordially by the hand, inquired for Mr. Higgins.

He was surprised to find that he was in London; and shook his head upon hearing with whom, and how employed. We sat down to dinner. Reginald was a good deal depressed during the meal, and soon after it was over he got up and went away.

Then my father inquired how matters stood, and I related our story, ending with the decision with respect to Mount Sorel, and with the sentiment that this last stroke had given the *coup de grace* to all hope and expectation of better days. Mr. de Vere, if he were implacable before, in spite of his strong desire to possess the place, would now be hopelessly impenetrable.

"I do not quite agree with you in that opinion, Edmund," said my father. "I see you do not quite understand De Vere. He has, with all his faults, that in him which you have never calculated upon: he has great magnanimity."

I confessed, I said, that I could never see it. He appeared to me, through the whole of this affair, to have acted in a very childish manner, and with the most selfish disregard to the happiness of others.

"You mistake him, Edmund; he is like the rest of us, the slave of his passions, and to gratify his passion, is too apt to trample without reflection upon many rights and many feelings. Pride is the secret idol worshipped in his heart. To be indebted to your friend for Mount Sorel, has been, you may rely upon it, secretly insupportable to his haughty spirit. And yet the temptation to re-annex that long-absented possession to his family, was irresistible. He has long been struggling painfully under these conflicting symptoms of his sovereign malady, and he has been relieved by a crisis

which has enabled him to throw both at once violently off; though at the immense cost of his own self-approbation, and of his daughter's happiness. He knows he is wrong, depend upon it; and this it is which makes him rude, which he never was before; and hard-hearted, which by nature he unquestionably is not. Now that Mount Sorel is irretrievably lost, and not only lost to him but lost to the world besides, annihilated as it were, you will find he will be a very different man.

"I shall go to him to-morrow," continued he. "Cheer up that poor fellow Reginald. It is really piteous to see such a fine young lad in such a state. His love had need be a brief madness, Edmund, for it is a very extravagant one."

Thus spoke the cool, middle-aged man of the world. I could scarcely help making an angry rejoinder, in spite of his good-nature.

Our evening was dull enough. My father read. Reginald sat moodily over the fire, supporting his head upon his hands. I, too, uneasy, and anxious to employ myself, was thrown listlessly upon the sofa.

Once or twice I saw my father eyeing me over his book. He never looked at Reginald. Good father! —he could not help feeling most anxious about his son, after all. And let those who will, say that this was not as it should be. He had too much of that penetration which is divination, not to see exactly how it was with me. I heard him give a sigh of satisfaction, then he drew his chair nearer to the fire, put the candle before his book, and continued to read with evident interest.

The next morning, as soon as breakfast was over,

without saying a word to either of us, he walked away to Holnicote.

This was what passed.

My father went in by the garden-door, as if he had been there yesterday; walked through the hall, meeting nobody; and straight up to Mr. de Vere's study, which he entered without the ceremony of knocking.

Mr. de Vere was sitting by the side of, not *at* his writing-table; his head leaning on his hand, his knees crossed, swinging his foot, and doing nothing.

He started up, and with a countenance suddenly illuminated with joy, stretched out his hand to greet his friend.

The meeting was equally affectionate and cordial on both sides. After a few brief exclamations and inquiries, the two friends sat down side by side upon a large low sofa that stood at right angles with the fireplace, in which a large, cheerful fire was blazing.

"And where did you start from, Lovel?" inquired Mr. de Vere. "Whence this morning?"

"From Mount Sorel," said my father.

Mr. de Vere started back as if a poignard had struck him; his countenance darkened; it was almost black.

"From Mount Sorel!"

"Ay—poor Mount Sorel," responded my father; "we may all take our last leave of that. Have you not heard what they are about to do with it? The house is to be pulled down, and the land divided into portions, lotted and sold. So ends the romance of Mount Sorel," added my father.

But Mr. de Vere was silent, he seemed thunderstruck.

My father gave him a little time, and then he said:

"Higgins is an odd fish. This is all done to revenge himself upon a son whom he loves more than the apple of his eye, because that son thinks himself pledged in honour (there is a good deal of love, too, in the matter), to abide by his engagements; and in defiance of all his interests, resolutely refuses to renounce Miss de Vere. Rather a hard bargain of it, for, as I understand the story, he has lost the bride as well as the birthright. Mount Sorel, at all events, is to be sold, and for whose benefit think you? Whose? but for the benefit of Hardy, Margerott, Skirving, and Company!"

Still Mr. de Vere listened, but spoke not.

"Now, De Vere," said my father, assuming a serious and affectionate tone, "it has been thought—and moreover, I know it has been said, that your almost insane desire to repossess Mount Sorel, had prompted you to lower somewhat of those high pretensions which you were thought to entertain in choosing a bridegroom for your daughter."

Mr. de Vere drew back a little.

"I doubt not you have felt that a motive thus base might have been suspected, if you had been found to yield an iota in that contention which has so unhappily arisen among you, and where you think your honour concerned. I know this has been your feeling, De Vere."

Mr. de Vere nodded.

"I know it was a high sense of what honour demanded which rendered you insensible to the feelings of nature, and to the tears of the sweetest and most

[illegible]

pressed my congratulations. He had deep and earnest feelings, as you well know, and he received this unexpected restoration to happiness in a manner which became him.

His happy temperament, however, soon restored him to his usual spirits; and it was with an eye sparkling with his long-lost gaiety that he cried, as we discussed the matter at our leisure, "That poor Mount Sorel, dismembered as it is about to be, should be the means of uniting us after all!" He pondered a few moments, then he added, "This future father-in-law of mine is no ordinary man, Edmund. I confess there is something, after all, noble in this sort of honourable extravagance. One can't help rather admiring this Quixotism of delicacy: very near killed us both—but that's a trifle. It's a pity every body can't just feel enough and not too much, and be reasonable in this age of reason... but we must take them all with their faults, and make the best of what can't be mended. And now Heaven only send that my poor, dear, honest father may recover his senses, and we shall all be right."

Oh, how Reginald looked as he came down, dressed to go out that day! so handsome; such an elegant, fine, high-spirited being.... and I made such an incomparable foil; for I was a man of weak nerves, and my spirits could not rise as his did at the first return of good fortune. Sufferings left their trace with me; long enduring traces, which have made me the still, quiet observer, and perhaps enabled me to be the garrulous relater that you have found me. So I looked pale and jaded, relaxed and languid, while he was all vigour and alacrity.

He would have the chariot out to take him; for he would not soil his dress, and it was no use being impatient: we dared not arrive much before five o'clock. He was quite right: he did not choose to appear before his restored father-in-law, dusty and hot after a walk. To his Clarice he would have flown if need had been, even in the rags of Lazarus... but this was another thing. So we went like princes in our chariot, and we got to Belmeade by a quarter to five.

We were ushered into the old blue dining-room; but only Mr. and Mrs. de Vere were there. Mr. de Vere came forward with his old dignified politeness, and shook Reginald by the hand as if they had parted but yesterday: then Reginald went up and kissed Mrs. de Vere: and she, rising, said, "Let me introduce you to your rooms up-stairs, Mr. Vernon, for dinner will soon be ready."

And the happy, happy mother took him up-stairs into that oriel-windowed sitting-room: and there he found Clarice and Mrs. Fermor.

It was not the least part of the felicity that now shone in the eyes of Clarice, that she was restored to those feelings of love and reverence which she had so long cherished for her father. To find a generous and honourable motive, however much she might think it exaggerated, for what she had found it impossible to regard but as great cruelty, was a relief and a consolation past words. Her warm heart revelled in admiration of his delicacy and disinterestedness, and her sweet eyes shone with gratitude for happiness restored.

Sweet child! she did not analyse: she asked not

how far a regard for her happiness had influenced him at all: she was grateful in the lump—her heart was only too glad to be grateful.

Mr. de Vere said nothing, his feelings had not yet learned to take words; but as he pressed his daughter to his heart, in one of those effusions of sentiment in which he so rarely indulged himself, he felt the value of that love which he had been upon the point of forfeiting.

Reginald wrote to Mr. Higgins:

"My dear Father,

"I am very much obliged to you for determining to sell Mount Sorel; and for the lesson in human nature which you were pleased to design for your most dutiful son. Perhaps, my dear Father, you will forgive the presumptuous puppy you have often called me, for offering a little food for your reflections. Now that Mount Sorel is devoted to the hammer, for the purpose of satisfying a set of hungry designing rascals and hypocrites who abuse a nature far too noble to understand them, be it known to you that Mr. de Vere rates your disinherited son so highly, that he has consented to give him his only daughter. This will surprise you: but so it is. Such were his notions of honour, it being no longer his interest to forgive what he considered an insult, he has done it, and redeemed his pledges to me. You will have those at your elbow, I know, who will boast of considering all this delicacy as belonging to the exploded age of chivalry; but I know there is that in my father's heart which will beat responsive, in spite

of his principles. Give me, then, your blessing, dear father; it is all I will ever ask of you; and don't refuse to shed the light of your countenance upon your poor Reginald. Let us be reconciled, dear Sir, though I do bring in my hand the sweetest, loveliest, best, and most affectionate of human beings as my wife and your daughter.

"WALTER THE PENNYLESS."

Mr. Higgins wrote for answer:

"I *am* surprised; and the old Norman is a greater fool than even I took him for. And I wish you delicate fine folks a great deal of happiness together. Being much too busy upon matters of moment to come to your wedding, I send you my blessing as desired, and with it a wedding-ring for my new daughter...who, I will own that, is the sweetest, prettiest, dearest love of a girl that ever a foolish young fellow lost the world for.

"THY LOVING FATHER.

"P.S. Mount Sorel will divide into a matter of about twenty-five lots. The timber alone is pretty nearly worth what I gave for the estate. I shall clear every stick; and these hungry patriots you speak of, are not going to have it all, a portion will go to buy shoes for the brave sons of liberty, in arms to resist the detestable audacity of Brunswick."

A ring, containing a very fine brilliant of the first water, with a magnificent ruby in the shape of a heart depending by a small chain from it, was the present this strange man sent to Clarice.

Reginald was in ecstasy at both letter and present. He saw that his father was relenting, and divined, in spite of his way of expressing himself, that Mr. de Vere's sentiments had struck upon a responsive chord.

However, we heard no more from Mr. Higgins for the present. But the evening before the wedding, Mr. de Vere received the following letter from his man of business.

"Sir,

"The division and sale of the estate of Mount Sorel being assigned to the firm of Worthington and Co.; Mr. Worthington, by desire, as I understand, of Mr. Higgins, has called upon me to inquire, whether you have any wish to purchase the chapel, and small tract of shrubbery and heathy ground adjoining; and to say that as, in this case, my principal might not perhaps desire that lot to be exposed to public auction, he had orders to dispose of it by private contract, and to accept any sum for it which might be offered at a fair valuation.

"I have the honour to remain,

"Your obedient servant.

"H. LAWSON."

I was by when Mr. de Vere received this letter. He coloured—still an obligation. It was written in the book of destiny. Mr. Higgins was to triumph. Mr. de Vere must submit to be obliged. The new was prevailing over the old; the present over the past; reason over chivalry: type of the approaching changes in all things.

He handed the letter to my father.

My father divined in a moment what was passing in his mind.

"It is written"—he said, folding the letter. "The man, after all, has good in him. This is a delicate way, though it looks a rough one, of doing a very kind thing: consulting the feelings of a man who has, as he thinks, mortally offended him."

"Shall I accept?" said Mr. de Vere, hesitating. "Impossible to lay myself under such an obligation!"

"He has been beforehand with you there," said my father, "the obligation is already incurred. He has consulted your feelings before his own were satisfied, and you *must* thank him for that, at least."

"I shall make him an apology," said Mr. de Vere. "I feel it is due to him. I shall not accept his offer; but I shall apologise for the violence of language into which I was betrayed."

And he wrote:

"Mr. de Vere presents his compliments to Mr. Higgins, and wishes to use no intermediate means, but to thank him, personally, for that consideration of feelings, perhaps too long indulged, which appears in a late proposal communicated to him through Mr. Higgins' man of business. Mr. de Vere has no wish to be favoured before the public in general in the sale of the property at Mount Sorel; more especially as he cannot disguise from himself, that on a late occasion, though sinned against, he was also sinning; and he begs to take this opportunity of making the apologies becoming a gentleman to give and to receive, for an intemperance of language which he has ever since regretted."

The answer was,

"Sir,

"I see you are too proud to be even accommodated, for it only amounts to that, by me; and I wish it had been otherwise. I do not, you well know, set up for the character of a gentleman; I consider all such idle distinctions between man and man as about to be exploded, under a purer and more rational system of things; but I know what it costs a man of your habits of thought, to submit what he thinks his dignity, to a sense of justice. I honour you for it; and I beg to say, that having received the apology, I most heartily desire to make the *amende honorable* on my own side. I don't know exactly what I said, for I was in a desperate passion; but as I am somewhat rough-tongued, and plain-spoken, I dare say I was, to the full, as rude as you were. So I beg you to receive on my part, all those apologies, which it becomes a *man* to give, and a *man* to receive.

"With best compliments to the ladies, and adoration to my fair daughter-in-law;

"I am, Sir, Yours,

"JOHN HIGGINS."

The marriage took place under these happiest auspices.

It was a very private marriage, for there were, indeed, few mutual friends to be invited; unless Mr. Higgins and his myrmidons had honoured the ceremony with their presence.

But he took no further notice of us. The papers informed us that he had again returned to Paris, to carry, as we supposed, shoes to the French *sans culotte* soldiers,

now marching against the infamous Brunswick, and to assist by his presence in the tribunes of the Convention, at debates which set all mankind in amaze.

I was present at the marriage. Perhaps of all the mornings of my life, that was the one I would least like to go over again.

Mr. de Vere gave his daughter away.

Reginald looked the picture of happiness; and Clarice! oh, such a sweet bride!

I never, never shall succeed by words in making you see her; and as for portraits, she was the despair of every artist that attempted them. They might give her pretty features; but who could render that ever-varying expression; gay, affectionate, cheerful, tender, melancholy—not only in turns, but at once... contradiction! nonsense! so it is, and I have done.

They went down to Reginald's own estate in Northamptonshire, which I am sorry to say, he wrote to tell me, proved, for he had never visited it before, the very ugliest property, he verily believed, that could be found in any county in England: Cambridgeshire not excepted. A formal George the First style of house, in the worst taste of that tasteless period; not a tree upon the property of half a century old, the last of the Vernons having pretty well cleared the land of such useless exuberances; and not a neighbour within hail. "We are as happy as the day, nevertheless; but I have some thoughts of selling, and buying a chip of poor Mount Sorel when it comes to the hammer. When is it to come to the hammer, Edmund?"

CHAPTER XVIII.

They are all gone into a world of light,
And I alone sit ling'ring here;
Their very memory is fair and bright,
And my sad thoughts doth clear.

HENRY VAUGHAN.

THE next letter I had from Reginald was dated London.

"Here I am, Edmund," it began. "Here is a pretty mess! Worthington came down by the mail on Wednesday night to Highbury, looking, poor fellow, as pale as death: you know what a gentle, meek-spirited solicitor he is. There is a grand blow-up, and that cursed Corresponding Society is all gone to the deuce, and my father is in for it, I fear, ankle-deep, knee-deep, neck-deep. Good Heavens! They had him up among the crew yesterday, and he's remanded; and Worthington seems to doubt whether they will accept bail. He's been furnishing shoes to the French soldiers with a vengeance. And now that war is at last declared, it won't do; and our minister won't bear nonsense; and they think he'll be glad enough to lay his hand upon one of

the whales; as for the smaller fry, they are caught by dozens.

"I went to see my father yesterday. I found him very glad to see me—all old scores forgotten at once, and his old hearty shake of the hand. He seemed pleased that I was with him at the first moment in his adversity; and he called me puppy, jackanapes, just in his old fond way. I was happy enough to be so abused, you may be sure. Then we began to talk of his affairs, and off he went! Oh, Edmund! you did once see my father in a towering passion, but that was nothing to it. And what do you think is the cause? Why Perrott! that sneaking, time-serving scoundrel, Perrott! What do you think he has done? turned king's evidence! Oh, you should have heard my father! It was really grand. And how between the pauses of the gust, he clapped me on the back and swore... he really swore, Edmund; I'm afraid he's sadly falling off from his principles... that I was the honestest fellow of them all, and true as steel, and a lad after his own heart, and so on. I am afraid he will be committed for trial; but the post is going out. Farewell."

"*Reginald to Edmund.*

"He *is* committed for trial, and for high treason! Good Heaven, Edmund! for high treason! and all on the evidence of that infamous Perrott. He has given up letters; letters of the closest confidence, which he had, most unhappily, in his possession. Sufficient, some say, to convict my father a thousand times over. I

have been busy with Worthington all day; Erskine is retained besides, &c. &c.

"Worthington looks pale and anxious. All London is in a turmoil. My head is beating like a mill wheel. High treason, Edmund! And the minister is implacable. He is resolved upon making examples. Who can wonder? How could my father be so infatuated? What could he be dreaming of? What could he intend? I send this by a private hand.... Letters at the post office, they say, are opened. I know not; but one cannot in these fearful times be too cautious.... My father is really great now. He has made up his mind to any event. He protests that since the declaration of war he has made no remittance whatsoever to the French government. Perrott is ready to swear the reverse; he is resolved, it seems, to convict my father. There had been a coolness between them for some time, because Perrott, I believe, was disappointed in his share of the cake of Mount Sorel: he's a malignant devil, and ready for the worst villany. I am in a horrible agitation.... They all assure me, that let the worst come to the worst, even if my father were convicted of high treason, the greatest punishment they dare inflict would be transportation; that they must remit the higher penalty. But, good Heavens, Edmund! Only to think of it, is enough to make one's hair stand on end. Come to me, Edmund, for I want help and advice. Come to me, dearest and best of fellows, in this, my dreadful necessity."

We all went up to him. My father—I—Mr. de Vere. Mr. de Vere was now rewarded for the sacrifice of

his pride that he had made. It was at last his turn to be of service. He had much influence when he chose to use it, and he was indefatigable. He went from minister to minister; he argued, he pleaded; he threatened. He managed to obtain, at least, so much, that the indictment was, after all, laid for a misdemeanour.

Mr. Higgins and he met at last in a strange place, in Newgate: he went with us to bail him. They were manly tempers, both of them. They shook hands at once; there was no display of sentiment, no reserve of feeling; they both felt they had been wrong, and had misunderstood each other. They had both the sense, in future, to bear with and tolerate their mutual failings.

The trials came on. Perrott did his best for his country, and for the attorney-general, and it was supposed went even to the extent of a little perjury, in support of the cause he was now advocating; but it was in vain. The genius of Erskine triumphed, and saved them all. It was as well; they had had quite enough of it; and, as I have before remarked, nothing so completely killed their cause as no one suffering martyrdom for it.

And what became of Mount Sorel?

Why, it was sold. But how?

Mr. Higgins really did want money; so he proposed to Mr. de Vere to purchase the house, park, chapel, and all. And Reginald sold Highbury, and lent him some of the money on mortgage; and I lent the rest; and it was settled upon the future eldest son.

So, Mr. de Vere died the actual possessor of Mount

Sorel, and at Mount Sorel, where he henceforth resided; and Clarice and Reginald lived at Holnicote.

These arrangements made them all rather poor; but those lead mines in the hill proved at last so productive, that the outlaying estates were redeemed; and all came round; and they were altogether the happiest set of people that I, in my pilgrimage, have I think seen.

Reader—you are, perhaps, so excessively kind, in the midst of the general contentment, as to think of me. Don't be uneasy about me.

I was not an unhappy, though I continued a thoughtful, reserved, and somewhat melancholy man. A disappointment in love, after all, colours the whole existence of a character such as mine. But I was in every sense but that, *quite* cured; and was able to enjoy their friendship, and did enjoy it, to the end of their lives.

A deep, intense affection for them both, succeeded to my passionate agitations. I lived almost entirely with them, and passed much of my time, a musing solitary, in the woods to me so inexpressibly dear.

And, too, there was one; she seemed to descend into this world to be poor Edmund's consolation. She was like what her mother had been, but still more joyous, and if possible more lovely; and that little thing took a sort of passionate fancy to me. She used to haunt my steps, to play at my side, to slumber on my bosom, to sit silent by me when grave, to prattle to me when gay. She became a sort of passion of my heart, and loved me as I loved her.

This is a lock of her golden hair.

They are all dead now.

Reginald and Clarice lived happily for many years; and I saw them both laid in one grave, and in that ancient chapel of Mount Sorel.

There lie Mr. and Mrs. de Vere; and there lies Mr. Higgins; and there lie Reginald and Clarice at their feet. All in one vault. And there, poor Edmund is to lie, too, when the great Summoner shall call him.

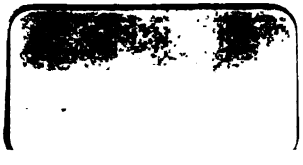
Edmund Higgins Vernon de Vere: such is the style and title of the present possessor: he has promised it to me.

The shadows are closing fast. "The pitcher is broken at the cistern, and the days are come in which it shall be said, there is no pleasure in them."

Take an old man's parting legacy.

So live, that looking back over the long roll of years departed—so live, as to look back upon a well-spent life. Ah! were it but so with mine.

Believe one, who has passed through all life's varied stages; such a retrospect carries that in it, cheaply purchased by all the treasures of the Indies. Farewell again; I go to join them in a better world. Reginald! Clarice! I come.

THE END.

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